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PARTISAN REVIEW

THE MYTH OF THE MARXIST DIALECTIC
EDMUND WILSON

BLUMFELD, AN ELDERLY BACHELOR
FRANZ KAFKA

MANIFESTO
DIEGO RIVERA & ANDRE BRETON

MUNICH AND THE INTELLECTUALS
AN EDITORIAL

ROBERT FITZGERALD · LEWIS COREY · LIONEL TRILLING · WILLIAM PHILLIPS · ELISEO VIVAS · WILLIAM TROY · CLARK MILLS

FALL 1938

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PARTISAN REVIEW

A QUARTERLY OF LITERATURE AND MARXISM

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Editor's Note: The third, and concluding, section of Dwight Macdonald's survey of the post-1930 Soviet cinema will appear in the next (Winter) issue.

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This Quarter

IFIRA

André Breton, a founder and leader of the Surrealist movement, and Diego Rivera, the painter of the Mexican revolution, are two artists who have long been active on the Left. Some time ago they rejected the Third International, politically as well as culturally. They now propose a new federation of artists and writers, Left-wing in tendency and free of all organizational dependence. On page 49 of this issue, we print their manifesto calling for the formation of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art. An increasing number of writers, artists and intellectuals are coming to realize that socialism offers the only permanent escape from the barbarism that is gaining ground so fast in capitalist society. We believe that these intellectual forces, hitherto scattered and isolated, should now draw together into some sort of organization for free discussion and for defense against their common enemies. We are, therefore, in complete sympathy with the general aim of the IFIRA, and we are ready to take part in the formation of an American section of the Federation. This, we think, should incorporate the international aims of the IFIRA in a program otherwise strictly adapted to American conditions. We invite all those interested in forming such a group in the United States to communicate with the editors of PARTISAN REVIEW.

MUNICH AND THE INTELLECTUALS

The liberal and radical intellectuals have thrived for two decades on exposing the meaning and motivation of the last Great War. Yet today they are urging upon us the very same social-patriotic policies, the identical supra-class illusions which they claimed the catastrophe of 1914 had taught them to renounce forever. If the Czech crisis did not come to war—if this time the imperialists held back—it was certainly not the fault of the intellectual Left. Its members, who only a few years ago pictured themselves as the bitterest enemies of war, are now among its chief evangels. It would almost seem

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that the peculiar function of the intellectuals is to idealize imperialist wars when they come and to debunk them after they are over. This procedure is safe and respectable. It permits you to defend the established order when it needs defence most and to play the revolutionary when it is too late to make revolutions.

It is not the intellectuals, however, who declare wars. Such fateful decisions are taken by the dominant class in response to its material interests. And as this class differs from the intelligentsia in respect to power, so it differs in respect to stability. The motives of the bourgeoisie are consistent and intelligible, and so are the motives of the proletariat. Possessor and dispossessed thus generate between them two social programs that are mutually exclusive. Individuals may deviate, but as a political grouping, the intellectuals, reflecting as they do material interests only at second hand, vibrate nervously between the principal antagonists. Unable to make up their minds, they persuade themselves that this very inability is the proof of their objectivity. Yet in the end—as the hour of trial approaches—they *do* make up their mind. They decide in favor of the side which holds the preponderant power. The fact is that the intellectuals in America as well as in the other countries of democratic imperialism have already made their decision. Most of them have taken their stand with capitalism.

Let us look at the record of the intellectual Left in America during the past ten years. Surprised by the economic crisis of the early 30's, large numbers of artists and writers discovered politics. Some adopted agrarianism or social credit; a few went fascist. But the great majority expressed themselves in favor of Marxism; openly supporting the Comintern, which at that time was playing a revolutionary game, they advertised widely their irrevocable break with capitalism.

Is it necessary to document this point? From the prolific evidence we select one item, a pamphlet called "Culture and the Crisis" issued during the 1932 elections by the Professional Groups for Foster and Ford. This statement was among the first manifestoes of the newly radicalized depression intelligentsia. Its signers were scornful of reformist schemes and parties. Short of revolutionary reconstruction, they saw no hope for society. "To insist on democracy as the answer to fascism," they wrote, "is to oppose air to bullets"; Roosevelt and the Democratic Party they dismissed as the "demagogic face of Republicanism." Among the intransigents who indorsed this statement were Granville Hicks and Sidney Hook, Lewis Corey and Malcolm Cowley, Isidor Schneider and John Dos Passos, Edmund Wilson and Kyle Crichton, Waldo Frank, Matthew Josephson, Sherwood Anderson, Frederick L. Schumann, Robert Cantwell, Ella Winter, etc. In view of the hostilities of our latter days, this juxtaposition of personali-

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ties may look odd. But odder still is the fact that a majority of the signers are now supporting Roosevelt and the Democratic Party quite as ardently as they are preaching a holy imperialist war against fascism.

Six years have sufficed to reconcile these irreconcilable revolutionaries to the existing order. And so complete is their change of heart that they now make it their duty to identify the "values" of Western culture with the continued domination of the world by the Anglo-French bloc of imperialists.

And let us not be thrown off guard by the anti-fascist mask of these liberal and "Communist" defenders of culture. The more cowardly they, if they think the victories of fascism can be arrested by an abject surrender to bourgeois democracy. Look to your Daladier, ladies and gentlemen of the democratic opposition to fascism, remember Chamberlain, and beware of Roosevelt!

The left-wing "realists" who rejected the warnings of the Marxist minority have been rewarded by the "Peace of Munich." Now they seek refuge in moral indignation. Overnight these self-styled *Realpolitiker,* proven to be dupes, have turned into moralists. The press of the People's Front is at present covering up the historical refutation of its policies by appeals to abstract morality. Periodicals like the *Nation* and the *New Republic* cry 'Treachery!' And who is the traitor? None other than Chamberlain, the political head of the British governing class. And what did he betray? The Soviet Union, liberalism, democracy. But Chamberlain has neither given any hostages to democracy nor has he any reason to defend the Soviet Union. He acted in the interests of his class, as any other bourgeois politician would do—and is it necessary to repeat the commonplace that to bourgeois politicians "national" interests are at all times secondary to class interests? Chamberlain is an obvious *enemy,* not a traitor. It is much more to the point to characterize as traitors those who instead of fighting the British imperialists, specialized in giving them gratuitous advice how best to protect their Empire against the depredations of their rivals; who silenced the masses while the Munich agreement was being prepared behind the scenes; who told us that if we wish to preserve democracy we must preserve the existing property relations; and who instructed the French workers and intellectuals that to place their confidence in Daladier is to act in the best interests of the Soviet Union.

Hitler is now the master of continental Europe. The "democracies" stand exposed as his collaborators. On the wreck of the Versailles system arises the specter of a new Holy Alliance. People on the Left,

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awakening from their illusions, are in the position of that band of refugees from the Sudeten districts who, as the New York *Times* reported, set out in the last train for Prague only to discover that the cars had gone into reverse and were rushing them back to the Nazis. But the Czech crisis will have accomplished something for us if it shatters the gospel of reformism and compels the labor movement to return to a policy of class struggle. The Comintern in particular has suffered a defeat unmatched in the long record of its disasters. It is left now without a program, its ultimate dissolution prefigured in the frantic improvisations and desperate guerilla shifts to which it has been reduced. While the crumbling of the Comintern represents the frustration of proletarian hopes, still it removes one of the causes of this frustration. In the intellectual sphere it promises to put an end to the People's Front regime of ambiguity in politics and literature alike. When the giant squid ceases to churn and roil the waters of controversy, it will no longer be so difficult to distinguish friends from enemies. Once the interests of the mind are no longer confused with the interests of the Soviet bureaucrats, it may again be possible to define political differences without mystification and to revive the original meaning of the socialist doctrine.

COMMUNIST COMEDY

John Strachey's last book, we thought, had its comic side, but the refusal of the State Department to allow him to enter the United States is almost pure comedy. We say 'almost' because any such arbitrary censorship on the grounds of alleged radicalism has serious implications for all Left-wing groups. Although we think that what Mr. Strachey had to say to the American people was false and dangerous, we are still more convinced it was bad policy to prevent them, by force, from hearing his message if they wanted to do so. But in itself, the Strachey affair conforms perfectly to Bergson's well-known definition of the comic as "something mechanical [here, the State Department] encrusted on the living"—the C. P. line has at least this quality of life: it is constantly changing. For several years now the C. P. has been openly renouncing its revolutionary aims, openly supporting the New Deal and sabotaging radical movements against the New Deal. But the Party's desperate efforts to make itself respectable have made practically no impression on bourgeois politicians, who continue to think of "Communists" in terms of bombs and whiskers. Thus when the C. P. in New York withdrew its own candidate for governor and substituted Governor Lehman on its ticket, the Governor promptly repudiated

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this support and asked Communists *not* to vote for him. And thus, when the Party's leading pamphleteer crosses the Atlantic to propagandize for the People's Front and the New Deal, he is barred from entry by the New Deal's State Department on the grounds that his political philosophy advocates the overthrow by force of . . . the New Deal. "Complete automatism," Bergson writes, "is only reached in the official who performs his duty like a mere machine, or again in the unconsciousness that marks an administrative regulation working with inexorable fatality and setting itself up for a law of nature."

SEMANTICS IS THE OPIUM OF STUART CHASE

Already semantics seems to be well on its way to that limbo which holds humanism and technocracy. Stuarts Chase's book has sunk without a trace; Thurman Arnold has given up exposing the Anti-Trust laws as purely verbal rituals, the better to function in his new job as Assistant Attorney General in charge of enforcing those same laws; only *Common Sense* continues valiantly to play the old 'word magic' tune. One more political escape mechanism of the middle class intellectual has broken down.

In semantics—in itself, a most useful study—the liberal's tendency to be misled by phrases appears in reverse, coming out as an undue preoccupation with the *abuse* of words. If only people could be got to call things by their right names, then all would be well—as though the economic contradictions of capitalism would not remain no matter what they were called. In *Save America First,* Jerome Frank suggests that "capitalism" in this country should be called either "the profit system" or "Americapitalism." President Charles R. Hook of the American Manfactuurers' Association is even more squeamish: he prefers "the inventive system." And Mr. E. T. Weir, of National Steel Corp., recently remarked of The Labor Problem: "The popular and prevalent impression of the word, 'bargaining,' is horse-trading, one group trying to get the better of another. If we could substitute the idea of 'collective cooperation,' we would take one of the most forward steps that has ever been made in industrial relations." Thus the right and the left wing of American capitalism are equally concerned about—words. Like Moliére's bourgeois, the American business man has been talking semantics all his life—especially when there is a strike on—without knowing it.

As a curiosity of literature, we may note that the first, and by far the most thorough-going, semanticists are to be found in *Gulliver's Travels,* Book III, Chapter V. Swift writes of "a scheme for en-

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tirely abolishing all words whatsoever" which was developed by certain sages of Lagado. "Since words are only names for things," these sages decided to "carry about them such things as were necessary to express the particular business they were to discourse on . . . I have often beheld two of those sages almost sinking under the weight of their packs, like peddlers among us; who when they met in the streets would lay down their loads, open their sacks, and hold conversation for an hour together; then put up their implements, help each other resume their burthens, and take their leave." This suggests, by the way, that what the semanticists are really after is a sort of intellectual barter system. They feel that if only we could do away with the currency of language—so debased and counterfeit by now, and so easily manipulated by unscrupulous speculators—we could see just what we are buying and selling with our ten-dollar words.

Another curiosity of literature is the Semantic Interpretation of History. Jerome Frank, for example, writes: "Our own Civil War was a conflict brought on by words. The hot-headed wordmongers of Massachusetts poured verbal poison into the thought processes of their neighbors. In the South, the poison-word distillers did the same. Men stopped sane thinking. . . . Monstrous, overpowering words took possession of men's minds—ABOLITION, SECESSION, STATES' RIGHTS. Fort Sumter was the result." This is the usual method of writing history, simply stood on its head: here the slogans are villains, there they are heroes.

The trouble with semantics is that, as in the passage just quoted, it doesn't carry its analysis far enough. Marx, for example, showed that Lincoln formulated the issues of the Civil War in stilted juridical terms which concealed the real economic issues at stake, and that he did this by insisting that the struggle was essentially a constitutional question. In this sense, Marx was operating semantically. But he went on to supply his own conception of the true historical content of the issues involved in the war—something which lies outside the province of semantics. Unless this is done—as Messers. Chase, Frank and Arnold almost never do—the Semantic Interpretation of History is a dangerous half-truth.

By the time of the World War, American liberal thought had at least raised itself to the level of simple materialism, as in the Beard school of historians. Now it seems to be regressing to its customary preoccupation with abstractions. This preoccupation may be positive—as in the *Nation's* drum pounding for "democracy"—or it may be negative—as with the semanticists, who think our problems would be solved if we could but agree on a definition of the term "democracy." We prefer the second to the first attitude. But we must point

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out that both are, basically, no more than symptoms that capitalism will no longer bear materialistic scrutiny. Since they accept the system, with whatever squeamish shudders, since they are willing to criticise everything *except* the economic foundations on which the whole crazy structure rests, the liberals find their road blocked and must retrace their path back to their old idealistic position. The substitution of semantics for economic and political analysis is a stage in the great retreat.

JEF LAST

"Does it say in the *Communist Manifesto:* 'A specter is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism.'? Or does it, perhaps, read: 'the spectre of Trotskyism'? 'Trotskyism'—that convenient epithet which disposes of all those who do not believe that the Green columns stuck on the Tverskaya are beautiful! All those who think Lenin is insulted by a sixteen-metre statue so long as Moscow's working class continues to live in hovels! All those who compare the 3,000 pictures of Stalin carried in some Red Square demonstration to the 3,000 images of the Madonna carried in a procession at Lourdes!"

Thus Jef Last, the well-known Dutch author, begins an article announcing his break with Stalinism. We translate from a recent issue of *Gegen den Strom,* a German radical monthly published in New York. Last's denunciation is a serious blow to what little prestige the Third International still enjoys among intellectuals. He was one of the five companions of André Gide on his Russian journey—and much the most ardently pro-Stalin, as may be verified by reading Gide's reports of their conversations. We think it worth noting, by the way, that the common attempt to discredit Gide's testimony on the U.S.S.R. as the naive and uninformed reactions of a 'mere literary man' will not work in the case of Last, who is a Marxist and revolutionist of long standing. Nor does it apply to another of Gide's companions, who has also broken with the Party since the 1936 trip, namely, Pierre Herbart, formerly editor of the French edition of *International Literature.*

From Russia, Last went directly to Spain, where he fought for a year as an officer in the International Brigade. His first-hand experiences there with the reactionary program and the G.P.U. tactics of the Communist Party began a process of disillusion which the Bukharin trial completed. Last's account of his experiences in Spain has been published in Holland as a book entitled, *One Year in the*

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Trenches of Madrid. In a future issue we may present some of this material.

Last's *Bruchstück,* or "Break-Piece," concludes: "I have outgrown my infantile superstitions and no longer believe in Beelzebub even when he is called Trotsky—or Stalin. I know very well that my comrades in the trenches fought for something more than just an efficient economic system, and that socialism is doomed to wither unless it roots itself in a human sense of truth, justice and love. My heart bleeds when I think of the series of Moscow trials which destroyed most of those who fought for the revolution. I know that good Party comrades have light-heartedly referred to these men as bedbugs who must be squashed, but how can one speak of socialist humanism when even the difference between a human being and a bedbug is forgotten?"

We might notice in passing another sensational defection from the ranks of the Third International's literary fellow travelers: no other than Romain Rolland himself, for years its most respectable and revered apologist in international cultural circles. M. Rolland has by no means broken with Stalinism as drastically as had M. Last. But he has made a gesture of opposition on the issue which above all others is vital to the Third International: the war question. Our Paris correspondent, Mr. Sean Niall, on page 102 reports a fact which, so far as we know, has not been mentioned in the American press: that M. Rolland was among the first to sign the anti-war manifesto issued on October 1 by the Teachers' Union and the Post, Telegraph & Telephone Union. Considering that the Communist Party press in France was practically alone in urging a war policy, M. Rolland's action takes on considerable significance.

REFLECTIONS ON A NON-POLITICAL MAN

It should hardly be necessary to state that we consider Thomas Mann one of the three or four great figures in modern letters. We have already printed three articles on various aspects of his work, and we plan shortly to publish a fourth. It is with some trepidation therefore, that we make the comments that follow. But we feel that it is our duty not to remain silent.

"I was always for peace," Thomas Mann told the ship reporters when he arrived in New York this fall to make his permanent home in this country. "I always hated war, and I hate it at this moment. But I must confess that it would mean a defeat of the ideas of democracy to accept this crime against Czechoslovakia without the strongest resistance . . . Although I am a man of peace, I would favor military resistance to the fullest extent." A few days later, the Man

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of Peace was a principal speaker at a big "SAVE CZECHOSLOVAKIA!" rally. The other headliner was Dorothy Thompson, whose column in the *N. Y. Herald-Tribune,* usually consecrated to abuse of the New Deal, was being temporarily devoted to propaganda for the holy war against Hitler. The Communist Party also took an enthusiastic, though unofficial, part in the affair.

By now, Thomas Mann should be used to such company. During the past year he has been a traveling salesman for "democracy," that is for the *status quo* in certain capitalist nations and against the *status quo* in certain other capitalist nations. He has been a tireless Guest-of-Honor and Speaker-of-the-Occasion, a prolific anti-fascist pamphleteer, and the recipient of many academic degrees. His little book, *The Coming Victory of Democracy,* was joyously hailed by Samuel Sillen in the *New Masses,* Max Lerner in the *Nation,* and Simeon Strunsky in the *N. Y. Times.* All three reviewers, of course, stressed Dr. Mann's "realistic" (*Masses*) and "memorable" (*Times*) presentation of the case for collective security—a doctrine which the events of the past quarter have rendered as obsolete as Original Sin. Nor can the title of Dr. Mann's book be called, at the moment, a happy one.

Such embarrassments have been all too frequent in Thomas Mann's career as a political thinker. During the last war, he gave his active support to the Imperial Government, going so far as to write an entire book justifying Germany's part in the war. In his *A Sketch of My Life,* he mentions with some pride that a special performance of his drama, *Fiorenza,* was given in Brussels for the entertainment of the German General Staff. Of the war, he writes: "There was nothing in my tastes or cultural traditions—which were moral and metaphysical, not political or social—to hold me aloof." (He does not explain this rather peculiar formulation.) In 1922, he came out publicly for the Weimar Republic, saying—and not at all cynically—that it appealed to him because it was a compromise which, at bottom, changed nothing. The Republic continued to change nothing, and Mann continued to support it—until the Nazis broke the stalemate. After 1932, he seems for a time to have put his faith mostly in Culture. "If the intellectuals of Europe will unite to declare in plain terms: we want no war," he said in a speech to the PEN club, "and if you let it come to war again, we shall refuse the project all moral support; moreover we consider war spiritually impossible today and therefore reject it and withdraw from it under protest . . . then there will be no war." The 1938 crisis showed just how much such idealistic statements were worth.

Thomas Mann is a great novelist, and he must be respected for

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taking so seriously his responsibilities as an intellectual. We must agree with him when he says that the man of letters cannot keep aloof from politics today if he is to fulfill his function. But there is a certain hypocrisy in Mann's treatment of politics. He is constantly protesting his inadequate understanding of the subject, thus claiming the indulgence granted the amateur. And he is as constantly taking the most extreme and reckless political positions, lending his Olympian, above-the-battle prestige to political doctrines of the most dubious kind. The contradiction is summed up in the title of the book he wrote in 1918 defending German imperialism. He called it: *Reflections of a Non-Political Man.* If Thomas Mann is actually a non-political humanist, then we should like to ask how it happens that his political position at any given moment in history always happens to be that of any 'liberal' bourgeois concerned, above all things, to defend his kind of capitalism.

THE CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL It would probably be difficult to unearth a more diverse collection of artists than those who have been carrying off first prize at the Carnegie Internationals during the last few years. The list reads somewhat as follows: Derain, Franklin G. Watkins, Picasso, Peter Blume, Braque, and this year, Karl Hofer. Surely the curve of taste implied by that sequence presents such unexpected gyrations that any one not familiar with the workings of art-committees might attribute to the judges a sort of biennial whimsicality. Whereas on some occasions they would appear to honor some outstanding contribution to culture, the following year they would seemingly retaliate by snatching the prize-painting out of a grab-bag. As the 1938 winner has already received his customary publicity from the press, it is perhaps superfluous to add that this has been decidedly one of the grab-bag years, so let us confine our enthusiasm to the recollection that Fate, after all, did direct the Jury's hand toward a painter on der Führer's black-list. (And may we express the fond hope that we shall encounter no more grab-bags that might disgorge any such unpalatable wares as the 1938 recipients of the second and third awards,—Vlaminck and Arnold Blanche respectively.)

Returning to our original list of all-time winners, we might note a consistent effort on the part of the juries toward the selection of something "modern" for top honors. They evidently set about their annual tasks with a grim determination that no one should ever call them academic moss-backs. Such a resolution might have been welcome had the committee's understanding of the nature of modern

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CONCRETION

An original lithograph by George L. K. Morris
printed by Albert Carman

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traditions been a trifle more profound, or at least sophisticated. In Hofer's *The Wind,* any one can detect a cocktail whose ingredients stem from Cézanne and Picasso's Blue Period (1905), linked back via Derain with the Baroque; and an eye unopened to quality might therefore conclude that the best of modern art can lurk within this combination. The judges, at all events, were not aware that the cocktail was very ill-shaken; nor that aesthetic subtlety and concentration have moved a long way since the halcyon days of les Fauves; nor that the illustration in question seems at the moment hardly less dated than Cot's more famous rendering of the same subject, recently removed from the walls of the Metropolitan to a snug little corner in the cellar.

The results of competition and award in every branch of art must prove confusing to any public that bothers to question them. Almost invariably, during the long years preparatory to a full culture, while the handful of genuinely gifted writers, painters, and musicians are struggling without means of support, the awards continue their flow toward hollow mediocrity. And there is little doubt that the trend will continue. For wherever an art-jury congregates it seems that the best works and the worst are likely to be the ripest for discarding. It is the extremes that assert themselves most emphatically, hence can least securely hold their own before the eye of the "responsible" appraiser. Only the vast unspeaking field of mediocrity is left them, from which the result must be whittled down through compromise, unless some familiar signature can serve to win over the jury. This has happened twice on our list, for twice has the Carnegie prize gone to an important name in modern art; yet in each case the picture itself has proved more revealing than the name that won it. The Picasso was an Ingres-period portrait, which showed perhaps that Picasso was a master; on the other hand it was a canvas devoid of the true Picasso quality, and a long way from the new course that all painting seems destined to follow because of him. And last year Braque showed in the *Yellow Cloth* that he has retained something of his taste, but hardly a trace of the once formidable ability to concentrate tone and design. Many great paintings by Braque and Picasso could doubtless be obtained for the Carnegie Exhibitions; it would be unthinkable that any of these should carry off the prize.

WANTED: FREE TRADE IN IDEAS

We had hoped to print in this issue, in addition to William Phillips' comment, a reply to Mr. Wilson's article from some orthodox defender of the Marxist dialectic. (They are a fast vanishing race!) So we wrote to Mr. D. J. Struik, who teaches mathematics

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at M.I.T. and contributes discussions of Marxist philosophy to such magazines as the *New Masses* and *Science & Society*. Somewhat to our surprise—in view of the *cordon sanitaire* the Communist Party has tried to draw around PARTISAN REVIEW—Mr. Struik wrote back at once that he thought he could make a "reasonable" reply to Mr. Wilson's article. But on October 8, a week or so later, we received this letter from him:

> "Gentlemen—
>
> Last week I received your request for an answer to an article by Mr. E. Wilson on Marxist dialectics. At that time I wrote back that I should be glad to collaborate and send in a reply. In the meantime, I have seen recent numbers of PARTISAN REVIEW, and I find that this periodical stands for a policy to which I most strongly object. The difference of opinion between the editors of PARTISAN REVIEW and myself is so considerable that I am afraid that it will be impossible for me to send in a reply to Mr. Wilson's article."

We would like to assure Mr. Struik of two things: (1) our genuine regret that we cannot present to our readers his vews on Mr. Wilson's article; and (2) our feeling that it is less important for the future of Marxist thought that the interests of the Communist Party be protected than that such problems as the dialectic be discussed freely and openly. For such purposes, our pages are and have always been open to both the opponents of and the sympathizers with the Communist Party.

THE HENRY SAGA (continued)

Some new members have been proposed for the Henry Club. Henry Osborn Taylor, a pillar of the National Institute of Arts & Letters is a great addition. (He is not to be confused—though, by very definition, he inevitably *will* be—with Henry Fairfield Osborn, elected last issue.) We are also glad to welcome Henry Dwight Sedgewick, of the American Academy of Arts & Letters, Henry Sloane Coffin, of Union Theological Seminary, Henry Noble MacCracken, of Vassar, and Henry Morton Robinson (unindentified). Two new honorary members seem eligible: Henry Van Doren and Henry Leslie Buell. Henry Lewis Mencken is a border line case: he would unquestionably have been blackballed fifteen years ago, but he has by now achieved a respectability perhaps solid enough to warrant his election. Eunice Clark, who suggested the idea to us in the first place, suggests that the Club appoint local representatives. Every community must have its Henry, unknown to national fame but filling the gap in local affairs that only a Henry can fill. For Rochester, N. Y., she nominates

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Henry Fairfield Burton (also not to be confused with Brother Osborn, above). She also adds some data on Henry's life habits: he summers in Connecticut; he often goes in for vague studies like constitutional law or what he invariably refers to as "international affairs"; he haunts the Academy of Political Science, the Foreign Policy Association, and the English Speaking Union.

One of our last-issue members, Henry Goddard Leach, seems to have discovered the perfect niche for a Henry: he is an ex-president of the Poetry Society of America. Henry-like, he takes his position quite seriously: every month in the *Forum* he conducts "A Page for Poets" in which he "notices" briefly the entire crop of new verse for that month. Industriously, he arranges the slim volumes under five headings: "A—Poetry of Permanence," "B—Poetry of Distinction," "C—Verse of Merit," "D—Verse of Originality," and a final class tactfully headed: "E—Verse of Local or Personal Appeal." We picture Mr. Leach wrestling with such problems as in which category to place May Terry Gill's *Mind and Melody* (privately printed) or *Gossamered Glory* by Ida Elaine James. Mr. Leach also gives a brief description of each volume. Thus Miss Gill's is "verse of noble purpose and fresh vitality"—though he only gives it a D rating; Miss James' is "Poignant, fluid and hopeful"; *The Gypsy Lure* by Elizabeth P. Allan is "Sane and objective"; and even Lena W. Parmelee's *Poems* (Class E) are cautiously praised as "Friendly and ebullient lays of nature." We should like to nominate Mr. Leach for president of the Henry Club.

Several Voices Out Of A Cloud

Come, drunks and drug-takers; come, perverts unnerved!
Receive the laurel, given, though late, on merit; to whom and
wherever deserved.

Parochial punks, trimmers, nice people, joiners true-blue,
Get the hell out of the way of the laurel. It is deathless. And it isn't
for you.

LOUISE BOGAN

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The School for Dictators

Ignazio Silone

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We print below a section from Silone's* The School for Dictators, *shortly to be published by Harpers. This chapter is headed: "On Fascist mythology, its obscurities, its fetishes, and its idols, and on the modern technique of hypnotizing and subduing the masses." It must be explained that Mr. W. is an American fascist politician who aspires to become "the future dictator of the United States." He is traveling through Europe, accompanied by his chief brain-truster, Professor Pickup, in order to learn from German and Italian experience how to seize power. Thomas the Cynic is a political exile living in Zurich who has agreed to give Mr. W. "a kind of rapid course on arcana dictatorium." He is described as a Socialist by conviction, but one who above all "believes that things should be called by their right names."*

PROFESSOR PICKUP

ON OUR way back from our usual walk through the wood, Mr. Cynic, we found the remains of some dainty feminine garments behind a clump of bushes. On the grass there were signs of a furious struggle.

MR. W.

I think somebody ought to inform the police. It looked to me as if a crime had been committed.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

A crime? Why employ such a serious word for such a petty thing, Mr. W.? Such is human nature that few men entirely succeed in refraining from it. At most you should imitate the priests and call it a sin; if you like, a mortal sin.

MR. W.

Oh, well, if that's all it is, there's nothing much to worry about.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Tell me, are the customs of this country so primitive and violent?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

On the contrary, the Swiss are a serious, hard-working people, tormented by innumerable inhibitions. Although they have known liberty for centuries, they have never confused it with license, and not even in periods of general laxity have they abandoned themselves

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to the light and frivolous customs that were fashionable elsewhere.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Am I then to conclude that this *al fresco* love-making is the consequence of a housing shortage?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

There is no housing shortage here, and moreover those who take part in these sylvan love-affairs are said often to be respectable members of the middle class, which is rightly considered, here as elsewhere, to be the faithful guardian of tradition and morality. If I am to believe what my friends tell me, they are often decent, middle-aged married people, who have large and comfortably furnished flats at their disposal, equipped with every modern convenience.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Are they then obeying a romantic and irresistible call of nature?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

I have pondered long and seriously on this problem, and I have finally decided that the real explanation must be far more profound and obscure than that. One might perhaps have to go right back to the pre-historic inhabitants of this country, *homo alpinus,* primitive Alpine man. This is not the moment to inquire why long-lost customs and emotions should re-appear at the present time. Besides, the phenomenon is not limited to the sphere of private life. It has been preceded here by unmistakable manifestations in the world of culture. Even if Johann Jacob Bachofen's matriarchal theory is not relevant to the question, Jung's psychology of the atavistic unconscious and Dr. Bircher's vegetarian, back-to-nature system of medicine certainly are.

MR. W.

I am afraid these people's atavistic inclinations will not prevent them from getting rheumatism as a result of lying on the wet grass.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

I think it is time we left these trivialities aside and talked of serious things. If I remember rightly, the subject suggested for today's discussion was Fascist ideology.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

We are nearer that subject than you imagine, my dear professor. I certainly do not wish to imply that Fascist ideology is merely an expression of atavistic impulses; but the links between the former and the latter are innumerable, and are stronger than in the case of any other political movement. In all the countries in which Fascism has triumphed, the axis of political life has been shifted and problems have been revived which seemed to have become obsolete; and they have been imposed also on Fascism's opponents. It is, of course,

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obvious that Fascism, being itself a symptom of the crisis of modern civilization, has been unable to eliminate the fundamental causes of that crisis. Nevertheless the old conflicts between parties and classes, which were chiefly nourished on the struggle between rival political and economic programs, have been swept aside and put on an entirely different plane by fascism, the chief item in the propaganda and ideology of which is not a concrete program but a nebulous mythology, expressed in symbols and fetishes of race and nation and accompanied by immediate aims of an unbridled demagogic nature. Although a political movement, Fascism succeeded from the first in avoiding the arena of struggle on which its opponents took their stand. On the latter it would easily have been beaten. Instead, without opposing program to program, without pledging itself to this or that organization of the state or of society, it successfully applied itself to discrediting politics in general and political parties and programs in particular, thus reviving and transferring to the despised political scene many pre-logical and a-logical relics of primitive mentality which were slumbering in the masses and which the progress of civilization had covered with a thin exterior varnish without touching their deeper roots. This great political gamble on the most turbid psychological forces inherent in mass-man succeeded all the more easily because, as all the evidence shows, it was not the result of deliberate calculation on the part of the leaders, who were themselves far too much in the grip of irrational feelings to be aware of them.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

What you consider to be relics of primitive mentality, Mr. Cynic, in reality constitute the inexhaustible source and fountain-head of mankind's religious feelings. There is no doubt in my mind that the wretched end of European Socialism was due to its vulgar materialist doctrines and its failure to acknowledge the noblest faculty of the human mind.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Perhaps we shall discuss religion another time, professor. As for Socialism, it was not a metaphysical but a very real and concrete defeat that it suffered, and the real political significance of the victory of Fascist mysticism over Socialist "materialism" can be seen when one considers that it has resulted in the apparent elimination of a number of vital problems which Socialism, for good or evil, represented and their substitution by vague phrases and "states of mind." Those problems, however, were not arbitrary; they were not invented by the Socialists out of thin air, and hence they remain the fundamental factors underlying the general crisis of our time and, of course, powerfully influence Fascism itself, the only way of getting

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rid of concrete problems being to solve them and not to ignore them. It is, of course, true that the Socialists, with their eyes fixed on the class struggle and on practical politics, were taken by surprise by the savage irruption of Fascism, failed to understand the reasons and consequences of its strange and unheard-of words and symbols, and did not for one moment imagine it possible that a movement of such a primitive nature might gain control of and manage a mechanism as complicated as the modern state. The Socialists were unprepared to understand the efficacy of Fascist propaganda because their doctrine was formulated by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century, since when it has not made any great advances. In a passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx rightly wrote that "the tradition of the dead generations hangs like an incubus over the brains of the living," but he could not anticipate the discoveries of modern psychology concerning the structure of the human mind. For a Marxist of the past century it was still permissible to believe that the limitation of man's consciousness was a consequence of the division of society into classes and the economic exploitation resulting therefrom, and that the proletarian revolution, by emancipating the productive process from its last shackles, would also completely emancipate the human mind. Such a belief would seem puerile today; nevertheless it is still carefully preserved in the intellectual baggage of every orthodox Marxist. Now it is to be expected that men's ways of feeling will undergo many future changes; but these will not suffice to modify man's psychological structure, or to bring into consciousness the tangled mass of psychic activity that constitutes the unconscious. If the backwardness of Socialist theory in regard to man's internal life had had no practical consequences, it would not be worthwhile mentioning it now. It was, however, one of the reasons why the Socialists, and for that matter all the old parties, failed immediately to appreciate the danger of Fascist propaganda, and have so far fought it with arguments that strike into the void.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Do you mean, perhaps, that the irrational is stronger than the rational? And that to put the masses in motion one should always appeal to their primitive instincts and not to rational arguments? If so, you would agree with what the philosopher Huizinga said to us when we visited him in Holland: "The crisis of our civilization," he said, "is the crisis of reason, the weakening of the critical faculty. There is a conflict between life and reason, and modern youth practices an idolatrous worship of life."

THOMAS THE CYNIC

I must confess that I am unaware of any struggle between the

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rational and irrational, between life and reason. Pehaps in this respect I am rather like a pedestrian who has a horror of traveling by air. I could not tell you at what atmospheric heights any such struggle takes place. The struggle between Fascism and Socialism in Italy and Germany, unlike the Trojan War in the *Iliad,* was not, so far as I am aware, accompanied by celestial rivalries and battles. Both in Italy and Germany, Fascist propaganda became effective as soon as the Socialist parties had shown themselves incapable of satisfying the concrete hopes of the masses. Let me give you an analogy. When an individual cannot face the difficulties of life and is incapable of realizing his practical aspirations he ends by taking refuge from his anguishes and desires in dreams. Similarly the masses, defeated as a result of the incapacity of their leaders in their efforts to do away with the present economic system, with its inevitable trail of crises and of wars, seek refuge from the despair which would otherwise overtake them behind emblems of an epoch in which all social contradictions will have been "symbolically" resolved, men will have become "symbolically" brothers, and capitalists' profits will have been "symbolically" abolished.

MR. W.

Do you really believe that fiction plays such an important role in Fascist ideology in Europe?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

It plays an important role in every ideology, in every state system, Mr. W., but in authoritarian ideologies and states, its role is particularly important. Sir James Frazer has stated that one of the essential elements in the maintenance of public order and the authority of the state is invariably the superstitious fancies formed about it by the masses. Without that explanation, much human history would be unintelligible; wars, for instance, the existence of parasitic social classes, the relations between capital cities and colonies, and a good deal more. Fascism did not fall from the skies, and those whom it subjected were not free men, but mobs inclined by their very nature to serve, and educated by all the political parties to obey. The psychologist Bernheim claims to have proved that suggestibility is "inherent in the human mind" and that the mental equipment of the average man is built up of "successive suggestions." The existence in man of this primitive tendency to submit to suggestion does not, however, mean that it cannot be overcome and made to give place to mental freedom and responsibility. But this is a disagreeable prospect to the majority of politicians, who like to use their fellow-men as docile tools; it is disagreeable to the latter too, because the lot of tame animals, even if it is not always enviable, is often the only alternative to starvation.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP

Would you do violence to human nature, Mr. Cynic? Please don't forget that intellectual freedom has always been the privilege of a restricted few, and presupposes a capacity for thought which the masses will never possess. The masses can only receive their mental nourishment in the form of pills, to be swallowed with their eyes shut.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

We are talking about two entirely different things, professor. Education, even higher education, as has been amply demonstrated by experience, is not in itself incompatible with servility. But let us not stray too far from our subject. The point I wish to insist on now is that education, even higher education, is not incompatible with credulity and superstition. I know a learned professor of mathematics who trembles with fear if a black cat crosses his path on his way to the university. In his case it is a reflex action which he cannot prevent and laughs at as soon as the cat has disappeared. But the most dangerous superstitions are the common ones which we do not even notice as such. I would not be aware of many of them myself had they not been pointed out to me by a friend of mine from Papua. He belonged to one of the most backward tribes of Dutch New Guinea and was sent by a missionary to a *De Propaganda Fide* college in Rome to be emancipated from his native superstitions and given a Christian education. He was, however, an ungrateful pupil. In spite of his lively intelligence, he never raised any objections to the religious truths of the Bible and the Church, and he seemed ripe to be sent back to his tribe as a native missionary when chance or Providence willed it that one day, in the course of a visit to the Zoo of the Eternal City, his eyes fell upon a magnificent old kangaroo. Now the kangaroo was, and still is, the totemic animal of the tribe to which this young man belonged, and this sudden confrontation with his sacred ancestor in a foreign city produced an indescribable effect upon him. It was impossible for him to doubt that a super-natural agency had been at work. Obviously this was meant as a warning to him, to admonish him to remain faithful to his forebears. His Catholic masters, applying all the resources of Christian apologetics, sought to rescue their young convert from this reversion to superstition, but all their efforts were in vain; and finally they had to show him the door of the sacred college, where his presence had become a public scandal. Sad and disconsolate, he wandered from city to city, and one day I met him by chance at the Zurich Zoo, where he was watching the kangaroos in a state of great emotional excitement. We walked back to town together, and in the course of conversation I revealed some vague knowledge of the latest investigations of European anthropologists into

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the mythology of the remotest Australian and Papuan tribes. This made him flare up. "I've read those people too!" he exclaimed. "Those so-called anthropologists of yours! They are absolute idiots, completely incapable of feeling the extraordinary and supernatural power of our totems, the black snake, the scarab, and the kangaroo. It can, of course, only be *felt*. They solemnly discuss our totems as though they were matters that could be discussed, but they are quite incapable of feeling things which every Papuan boy, and even every Papuan woman, takes for granted!" When his agitation was at its height he produced a notebook from his pocket and gave it to me to read, telling me that that was his revenge. He had called it *The Incredible Superstitions of the Backward European Tribes.* This title pleased me so much that I read it all through at a sitting. He turned out to be an acute observer of the customs of old Europe, his virgin eyes revealing to him innumerable fetishes, idols, totems, and taboos that preside over the most important acts of our collective life, I might say practically without our being aware of them. I have never seen a more radical or irrefutable criticism of our present civilization. The picture was painted unsystematically and in anecdotic form; he merely described his discoveries in the order in which they were made. As you can well imagine, the whole Catholic liturgy, with its incense, candles, unguents, ashes, relics, and sacraments, was given the place of honor. But there were plenty of curious observations of our private lives. I remember in particular a highly involved discussion between the Papuan and a Roman lady who had a golden wedding ring on her finger. After questioning her about why she wore it, the young man had passed on to discussing the relations between wedding rings and conjugal fidelity, the *Propaganda Fide* institution and the idea of faithfulness to one's country. In the end the poor woman was left bewildered and speechless. One day he was taken with the rest of the college to the Piazza Venezia to render homage at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, situated at the foot of the "altar of the fatherland." "Is the fatherland a madonna too?" he asked a superior. "No," was the reply. "Then why is there an altar to it?" "That is something you cannot understand." "Why not?" Carabinieri came up and told him to hush. "If I have to hush it must be because the fatherland is a madonna too," he went on muttering. Another day he had noted: "I read in a paper that in Abyssinia the Roman wolf has driven out the Lion of Judah. It seems that the British lion betrayed the Lion of Judah. As with us at home, every big European tribe venerates a totemic ancestor; France has the cock, Germany the eagle, Italy also the eagle, Rome a she-wolf with a litter of two cubs, while Holland, Belgium, Sweden, and many other countries have the lion, which seems

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to be the most common animal in Europe." On another occasion he was present at the launching of a ship. "Excursion to the sea," he noted. "Christening of a big ship. A lady breaks a bottle against the ship's side. They tell me it was a bottle of champagne. 'What a pity,' I remarked, 'it would be better to drink the champagne and break a bottle of water over the ship.' 'In that case the christening would not be valid,' they told me. I pointed out that Jesus was baptized with water. They said I was a fool. I asked whether a ship had a soul. 'No,' they replied. 'What is it then that is being christened?' I asked. They said I was a bigger fool." Another day he wrote: "Today I watched a lot of men marching. They were all dressed in the same way. In front of them walked a man carrying a pole to which a piece of cloth was attached. Everyone saluted it respectfully. One old man even wept. One man who did not take his hat off was set upon and beaten. I asked why. I was told he did not salute the flag. 'But it is only a piece of wood with some cloth attached to it,' I pointed out. 'The flag,' someone shouted, shaking his fist at me, 'is the sacred symbol of the country.' 'It is the country's blood and soul,' somebody else shouted, drawing a knife. 'Has the country a soul?' I asked. At that they wanted to take me to prison." Other incidents he described referred to the magic power of stamps, uniforms, emblems, and so on, and I shall not tell you of them now because you already know them very well, though being so used to them, one ends by paying no more attention to them.

MR. W.

Your Papuan story is at least entertaining, even if it isn't true.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

I found the following passage in a study by the ethnographer A. P. Elkine of the secret life of the Australian aborigines: "The tie between a person and his country is not merely geographical and fortuitous; it is a vital, spiritual, and sacred tie. His country is the symbol of the way of access to the invisible and powerful world of heroes and ancestors and the powers who dispense the life of which man and nature profit." I warned you in advance that this passage applied to Australian aborigines, who are entirely out of touch with so-called civilization, lest you should think it referred to the slogans of Nazi propaganda. Nevertheless there is a difference between the mental attitudes of the Nazis and the natives of Australia in this respect, and it is entirely to the advantage of the latter. In their case the mystical contact they maintain with the forces of nature is genuine and spontaneous, while in the case of the contemporary Germans it was imposed by the suggestive power of a nebulous ideology, the success of which is to be attributed to the terrible state of spiritual bewilderment

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through which the German people passed during the post-war years.

MR. W.

Propaganda, however able it may be, cannot be successful unless historical reality offers it some pretext. The primeval German forest was effective propaganda in Germany and the Roman tradition was similarly effective in Italy because both were backed by still-living traditions that were far older than either democracy or Liberalism. But in America we lack all tradition. Our history begins with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Before then the thirteen states were British colonies. Hence our brief history is entirely Liberal. If you consider that in 1776 the United States had barely two million inhabitants (and the War of Independence caused a number of leading families to leave the country and return to England) and that the population today is one hundred and thirty millions, it is clear that so far as its population is concerned the United States is a creation of the Liberal epoch, and a recent creation at that. A national tradition is not created under such conditions.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Do you really believe the Roman tradition exists in Italy, Mr. W.? I assure you that exactly the opposite is the case. A few years ago there was a discussion among Italian historians concerning the date of the origins of the present Italian nation. Some put it at the beginning of the nineteenth century, others favored the eighteenth century, others even went back to the Trecento and Dante. Fascism was then in power, and naturally there is no lack of Fascist historians, but not a single one of them, Fascist or otherwise, had the courage to maintain that the history of Italy begins with classical antiquity. The survival of the Roman tradition in Italy is the sheerest nonsense, but that did not prevent Mussolini from making it the central myth of Fascist ideology and drawing on it for titles, symbols, and rites for the Fascist party organization and the Fasicst state. Young men have volunteered for service in Africa and Spain and laid down their lives for the sake of the Roman tradition. It was not a "call of the blood" that made them do it, but the suggestive power of Fascist propaganda.

MR. W.

But there must be some element of plausibility if a deception is to take place. There is at least a geographical correspondence between the Italy of today and the Rome of the Caesars. In America we have nothing equivalent.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

If a deception is to take place, the first condition, Mr. W., is that its victim should be in the necessary state of receptivity. The contents of the suggestion and the character of its practitioner obviously have

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their importance, but both are only secondary. The really important thing is the victim's state of mind. In the last analysis all suggestion is auto-suggestion. That is the answer to those who, having studied the Nazi and Fascist leaders at close quarters and discovered their intellectual and moral limitations, are unable to understand how such mediocrities could create such powerful mass movements. It was not they who created the movements; in reality it was they who reaped the benefit of them. The secret of Fascism and National Socialism must be sought in the first place in the mental state to which the Italian and German masses were reduced as a consequence of the war, the economic crisis, and the failure of the Socialist parties. A Nazi propagandist, Dietrich, unknowingly admitted as much when he wrote: "One experience we had. Trust in the Führer grew strongest, and gripped the whole people, in those parts of Germany where economic and moral distress was greatest and seemed most intolerable."

MR. W.

Please let us not forget the practical object of our conversations. What consequences do you draw for me from all this, Mr. Cynic? That is what interests me.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

The most important consequence for you, Mr. W., is this. Do not fall into the sin of pride. Do not believe that it is the function of a Fascist leader to create Fascism out of nothing. Rather place your trust in the impotence of the old parties to overcome the crisis of civilization which mankind seems to have entered upon. Do not forget that in all probability we are barely at the beginning of a long series of wars, revolutions, counter-revolutions, and economic disasters. Therefore do not be in a hurry. Put your trust in mankind's possible return to barbarism, and do not be discouraged. Even without a great historical tradition behind them, the masses can easily return to barbarism with the potent aid of war and famine. Heaven forbid that I should cast doubts on the wisdom of Professor Pickup and your other colleagues, Mr. W., but when it comes to really stupefying the masses, without the decisive intervention of wholesale massacres and prolonged distress, the efforts of the best propagandists will be as ineffectual as the buzzing of a lot of flies. Please do not be shocked if I call things by their right names. For the sake of clarity I speak with the utmost frankness. It is now an established fact that as as consequence of international and civil wars, and prolonged unemployment a wave, an epidemic, of psychological dissociation occurs, a process by which an ever-increasing number of individuals cease to function normally. A gradually atrophy of their higher mental qualities takes place and at the same time a gradual hypertrophy of their lower mental faculties,

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the simple, automatic ones. I am not speaking now of the serious cases which require actual psychiatrical intervention, but of ex-service men and unemployed generally, and their families, and all those who have been subjected to intense emotions for a long time. Save in exceptional cases, experience has shown that men's internal equilibrium cannot survive such super-human ordeals. They oscillate between black despair and naïve optimism, and fall an easy prey to every demagogic phrase. Physical insecurity and uncertainty about their livelihood, if protracted for years, lead even the most normal, most cultured, best-educated men back into a state of primitive anxiety, a state that after many centuries of development seemed definitely to have been superseded. That, Mr. W., is the state of grace in which Fascists are formed; not the drawing-room Fascists, but the real Fascists, the desperate ones, whose sole presence at a meeting of their opponents is sufficient to cause terror and panic.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

What you say, Mr. Cynic, reminds me of some words of the Spaniard Ortega y Gasset, whom we met in Paris. "The man who is now beginning to come to the top," he said to us, "is, in comparison with the complex civilization in which he was born, a primitive, a barbarian, a man who emerges from the cellar, a vertical invader. He is, in fact, a different kind of man: a man who can act only in a group, in a word a mass-man." The mobilization of millions of mass-men by means of Fascism is nevertheless not the whole of Fascism. At most it may explain some noisy aspects of the movement, but the essence of Fascism is in its idea. Mass-man is the brute force which the Fascist idea uses in order to triumph. The two things must not be confused. To state it in strictly scientific terms, masses are masses, but ideas are ideas.

MR. W.

Why do you insist on wasting our time? You know very well that there are plenty of ideas everywhere in America, but not in politics.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

My dear Mr. W., once more let me repeat that that is the whole trouble. It is the very thing we must fight against and put an end to. Without ideas our country will remain throughout the ages the picturesque hotch-potch it has hitherto been. I believe the hour is approaching predestined by fate to be the beginning of a new era; when America will cease to be a vast, uncoordinated patchwork and will for the first time become a real, ordered, and stable society. That miracle can only be accomplished by the Fascist idea, shining as a bright light to show the way to millions of mass-men. Only the Fascist idea

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can give a solid and unshakable foundation to the shallow nationalism of America. Instead of seeking ephemeral success, of the kind achieved by the Townsend movement, we must have the courage to place the real problem before the forum of public opinion, that of the organization of the state. A discussion of the social order and the structure of the state . . .

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Let me warn you, professor, that you are on the wrong track. In reality Fascism is an attempt to put the social order beyond discussion, to remove it from the fluctuations of public opinion. For Fascism society is eternal; it is there when the individual is born and remains there after he is dead. The individual must adapt himself to society, and not the reverse. In this sense European Fascism is an attempt to bring the relations between the individual and society back to the state they were in two centuries ago. Prior to the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, the social organism as a whole was not a subject of dispute. But then men turned their attention to the problem of society itself. The period of political and social rationalizations began, the period of programs. Liberalism, democracy,and Socialism were born, with all their varieties, each one of them representing a different conception of the relations between men. It seemed that reason had definitely displaced tradition. It was, however, a purely platonic and decorative reign. In the nineteenth century society continued its intemperate evolution and development, obeying laws other than those of reason. That evolution and development was, however, itself the object of fresh discussion, giving birth to still more programs, and no one was any the worse for them. This went on until the Great War created a situation in which discussion became dangerous. The old social order was revealed as rationally indefensible. Then Fascism emerged. It emerged from the anxiety of the middle classes, whose social existence was threatened by technical progress; from the disillusionment of the workers after the defeat of their ill-organized revolutionary attempts; from the fear of the capitalists, over whom there hung the meance of expropriation. Fascism did not come forward with a new program to compete with the already existing programs; it did not even criticize its opponents' programs. It took up a position outside the arena of discussion, and denied that society was a legitimate subject for discussion. Against the "corrupting" reason of the politicians it appealed to the primitive instincts, to the voice of blood; it appealed to tradition, to the mysticism of the sheep-fold, "to the need for believing in a leader," to loyalty, to solidarity in the face of danger, to "salvation in obedience," to the "nobility of sacrifice" to "brotherhood dictated by destiny . . ."

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MR. W.

According to what you say, Mr. Cynic, it seems to me now that Fascism in my country will be confronted with one very easy and one very difficult task. America, as you know, never had an Age of Enlightenment and was therefore spared Socialism and the struggle of political ideologies. If the economic experiments of the present President fail, it will not be difficult to persuade my fellow-citizens that they were the victims of political ideology. "Down with politics!" will therefore be a very popular slogan and will please everybody, the workers, the farmers, and the trusts. I may confess to you that I see the whole of my political future tied to that happy combination. Nevertheless I wonder whether it will only be a flash in the pan. To get into power will not be difficult. But to remain there? It is not possible to entrench oneself behind a national tradition where no such thing exists, and to create a mythology for a people of such varied origins as the Americans. You are perhaps aware that all those who believe that Fascism is impossible in America base their arguments on our peculiar national psychology.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

The people who believe that are literary men, and notions of national psychology are largely literary, Mr. W. Don't forget that before Fascism came into power in Italy there were many who maintained that it was incompatible with our rebellious national temperament. In Germany they contrasted the crudity of Hitler with the enormous German contribution to poetry and philosophy, and said that Fascism was impossible too. Before 1933 one often heard a phrase that might have been borrowed from our friend Professor Pickup's Neo-Sociology. That phrase was "Germany is not Italy." From 1933 to 1938 the phrase was "Austria is not Germany." One must bear in mind that even the most firmly established national tradition has only surface roots in the psychology of the average individual. Those are the first to give way under the strain of the profound spiritual crisis which makes Fascism possible, Professor Pickup does not believe me, but he will believe Hitler, who has recognized as much on various occasions. "The impetus towards the most tremendous revolutionary changes in this world," he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "consisted at all times less in scientific knowledge guiding the masses than in the drive of an inspiring fanaticism, sometimes an actual hysteria." No country has a tradition or national psychology rendering Fascism inevitable, Mr. W., and similarly no country has a tradition or national psychology rendering it impossible. The influence of national psychology on the growth of Fascism is purely decorative, and may serve to distinguish, say, German Fascism from Jewish Fascism (for Jewish Fascism exists

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too!) or Italian Fascism from the French or Irish varieties; but underneath these purely superficial diversities there is invariably a common social and political denominator and a common psychological denominator. It is true that in every Fascist ideology you will find myths borrowed from national tradition, but their effectiveness is solely due to the fact that they are conceived of and felt by the masses as symbols of primitive complexes. These complexes are also found in men entirely devoid of national tradition, being relics of a time in which nations did not even exist, and very probably they will continue to exist even after the nations of the present day have disappeared. Professor Pickup is almost certainly aware that modern psychology has discovered that the content of the dreams of Negroes does not differ from that of the dreams of Europeans or Indians. That is a vital fact for you, Mr. W. The hundred and thirty million citizens of America come from many different countries and show much diversity in ordinary, workaday, waking life, but at night they are simply men, dreaming the same dreams and oppressed by the same nightmares. A national tradition is entirely superfluous. When all the other necessary social and political conditions exist, those dreams and nightmares will be the raw material from which the American Fascist ideology will be created.

MR. W.

If I have understood you rightly, I cannot help concluding that America is Fascism's Promised Land. In the past century there has been no lack of premonitory signs. Have you ever heard of the cider election of 1840, Mr. Cynic? A man without a program but with a romantic mind conquered the country, traveling from place to place in a log cabin on a large wagon, with a barrel of hard cider on tap for the crowd.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

The contempt for the masses that your words betray is justified, my friends. But if you put the leaders on the same level as the masses, I entirely disagree with you. Your true leader is skilled at manipulating primitive formulas in order to set the masses in motion, but he needs a clear program in order to give them direction. I could give you innumerable quotations from my *Breviary of Fascist Thought,* but I hope a few only will suffice to convince you. "The masses," Mussolini wrote, "are nothing but a herd. They are the prey of supine, fragmentary,and incoherent impulses. They are nothing but raw material. The altars erected by Demos to Their Holinesses the masses must therefore be struck down. This does not mean that the masses' well-being must be neglected. On the contrary, one may recall that Nietzsche desired that the masses should have all the material well-

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being possible, so that they should not disturb the higher manifestations of the spirit with their complaints and tumults." The spirit, gentlemen, is at work even when it does not show itself in the street. Hitler has defined the idea as "the pole-star of searching humanity." The masses must be given something other than dry arguments. Hitler said in one of his speeches that it was necessary to create "a new faith for the great searching and erring masses, which would not desert them in this time of bewilderment, a faith by which they would swear and build." It would therefore be wrong to see something tyrannical and blind in the relations between leader and led. Everyone has his own function.The function of the masses is instinct, that of the leader is clear sight. Nevertheless the path is a common one. "For the remarkable thing about all great reforms," Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "is that at first they have only one single champion, though many millions of supporters. Their goal has often been the deepest, most heart-felt aspiration of hundreds of thousands for centuries, until someone has come forward as its herald and standard-bearer, and helped it forward to victory clothed in a new idea." Is this a peculiarity of Fascism or National-Socialism? Not at all. Goebbels stated in *Signale der neuen Zeit:* "History shows that the great world movements have always arisen when the leaders have been able to unite their followers on a quite simple and easily intelligible point." It is true that Marx claimed to give a scientific basis to the Socialist movement, and the latter may even have been of some use to the Socialist leaders, but even the Socialists have always used simple and primitive slogans to set the masses in motion. The German Communist Clara Zetkin says in one of her books that she once asked Lenin if he did not believe that the illiteracy of the Russian peasants had aided the victory of Bolshevism, and Lenin promptly agreed. Fundamentally Fascism behaves in the same way. "We had no intention," Goebbels wrote in *Wesen und Gestalt des Nationalsozialismus,* "of basing our views on a scientific foundation. Our object was to put them into practice. Posterity will recognize our ideas from our deeds, and not the reverse." The achievements of Fascism in Europe are already so tremendous that there is abundant material for its scientific justification. I am convinced that in every country in which a Fascist party takes the field in future it will appeal not only to the instinct of the masses but also to the scientific clarity that results from experience. Corporativism, for example, is a system of the organization of production the superiority of which can be scientifically demonstrated. Fascism showed signs of uncertainty at first, and it has proceeded experimentally in various fields, but it discovered its characteristic institutions in the end. Why should we refuse to deduce scientific prin-

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ciples from Fascism's actual achievements and why should we not adopt them as our program? Why should we not have this program publicly discussed? We should not, of course, admit the masses to our discussions, but only the more intelligent sort of people. Why should we not show that our program is in harmony with experience and reason?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Have you really such a program?

MR. W.

Yes. Why conceal it? It was worked out by a committee of learned dons, presided over by Professor Pickup. It is a very long program. To be perfectly frank, I have not yet finished it.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Then don't finish it, Mr. W., unless you wish to ruin your career, and don't allow it to be printed and distributed.

MR. W.

That committee cost me a small fortune, Mr. Cynic. The program is complete and paid for. Why shouldn't I have it printed?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Because it would be a fatal blow to your movement, Mr. W. Write off the expenses as donations to charity or funds misapplied or something, but tear that program up. That's the only way of cutting your losses. To try discussing or persuading would be madness. The last thing a Fascist leader must appeal to is the critical faculty of his audience, for he would be its first victim. A Fascist leader must inspire his own followers and the people with distrust, hatred, and contempt for those who discuss. Everything a Fascist leader says must be presented under the irresistible guise of the obvious. "It is so because it is so, and it cannot be otherwise." All doubt is excluded, and there is nothing to discuss. Since you have compiled a *Breviary of Fascist Thought,* add this to it, professor. The Nazi Wilhelm Stapel says in his book *Christentum und Nationalsozialismus:* "Since National-Socialism is an *elemental* movement, it cannot be met with 'arguments.' Arguments would only be effective if the movement had grown great through arguments." Fascism claims to fulfill the same spiritual needs as religion, a new religion that requires the greatest sacrifices from its proselytes. "Do not overlook the religious features of our movement, which is characterized by the highest moral qualities of man, by sacrifice, by devotion, by righteous indignation," the Nazi Feder declared in a speech in the Reichstag. "In turning the Jews and money-changers out of the Temple we shall regard ourselves as the best followers of the Savior." Hadamowsky stated in *Propaganda und nationale Macht*: "Political propa-

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ganda preaches faith; that is its essence. Our people yearns for political life to have an inner meaning, it longs for a political confession of faith and is ready greedily to accept it." And Goebbels stated in his *Signale der neuen Zeit*: "Millions are ready to die for a gospel, and our movement becomes more of a gospel every day. We cannot be silenced with the argument that National-Socialism is a political creed, a political confession of faith, for that is what it is." No prophet has ever discussed his own mission. If a Fascist leader started discussing, it would show he did not know what Fascism was. Let me give you an example from the recent history of this little country. A few years ago, as a repercussion of the Fascist triumphs in Italy and Germany, an embryonic Fascist movement started in Switzerland. After a noisy beginning, it rapidly faded out. Primarily its failure was due to the absence in this country of the peculiar political and social conditions which are the essential background of any serious radical movement, whether of the Left or of the Right. The failure of Swiss Fascism was accelerated, however, by the fact that from the beginning its leaders were of the Professor Pickup type, and believed it possible to spread Fascism on the basis of public discussions with Socialist, democratic, and Liberal opponents. The results were invariably disastrous, though I must add that probably those unfortunates had no other choice. In view of this country's age-long democratic education, if a political leader declines to engage in public controversy with his opponents, he promptly discredits himself in the eyes of public opinion and most probably finds himself with no supporters. Demagogy in this country is made still more difficult by the people's scanty sympathy for eloquence and fine phrases. But, fortunately for Fascism, not all the democratic countries are like Switzerland, and in the majority of them, if eloquence and fine phrases were suppressed, where would democracy be? Involved in this attempt to smuggle Fascism into Switzerland were plenty of studious youths who, like Professor Pickup, set themselves the task of formulating a theory of Fascism from a study of the state institutions created in recent times in Italy and Germany. But theirs was an error typical of intellectuals, who, faithful to the saying that intellectuality and intelligence are quite distinct, allow themselves to be readily attracted by the formal and strictly juridical aspect of political phenomena. It is the fault of this kind of intellectual that democracy has become synonymous with parliamentarianism, and Bolshevism with soviets, even where parliamentarianism has destroyed democracy and Bolshevism the soviets. But let us leave these things aside, for they do not concern us now. As for Fascism, fix this well in your mind, Mr. W. There can be Fascism without national traditions,

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and there can also be Fascism without corporations. The essence of Fascism does not lie in any of the institutions it may create in one country or may not create in another. Hitler stated this clearly in a speech he made to the Bavarian monarchists in the spring of 1922: "The state form arises from the intimate nature of a people, from necessities that are so elementary and powerful that in days to come they will be understood by every single individual, if only Germany is once united and free." A year later he came out for a "real German people's state," that "would be first the German republic" even if "an emperor or a king were to be at its head." Fascism is compatible with a monarchy or a republic, with a parliament or with corporations. Institutions have no value by themselves but only according to the regimes in which they flourish, and in a Fascist state everything is Fascist. The only thing with which Fascism cannot be reconciled is clear ideas, and since these do not grow by themselves, like grass on the hillside, but are always the result of discussion between thinking persons, the only thing with which Fascism is incompatible is discussion. You must avoid discussion, Mr. W., like the devil holy water.

MR. W.

And if I am challenged to a discussion and invited to give my opinion on an important question?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

You will reply that no one can prevent you from fulfilling the mission entrusted to you by destiny.

MR. W.

And if they ask me what my mission is?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

You will reply that it is to save the country. "The country must and will be saved," you will say. "Nothing will prevent me from saving my country. No one can oppose destiny. That, brothers, is my mission."

MR. W.

And if they ask me details about my mission?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

You will reply, "My mission is to save the country. Destiny has entrusted me with that mission," and you can add that that is all you have to say to politicians, because your mission will be accomplished among the masses.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

I haven't heard anything so absurd for a long time. Do you seriously maintain that Fascism has achieved power anywhere by behaving in such a fashion?

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THOMAS THE CYNIC

I do. Mind you, Fascist leaders have not always resisted the temptation of engaging in controversy, and have not always refrained from putting forward political ideas and even practical proposals for reforms. It was not thanks to these, however, that they triumphed. The latter are the most ephemeral of their writings, and are of no interest or value now, except to instruct the reader about fleeting moments in the development of Fascism. In Mussolini's writings you will find the most contradictory statements even on such matters as the fundamental conception of the state. "Down with the state in all its forms and all its incarnations; the state of yesterday, of today, and of tomorrow; the bourgeois state and the Socialist state. Nothing is left for us, the last survivors of individualism, if we are to pass through the present night and that of tomorrow, save the absurd but always consolatory religion of Anarchy." That is what he wrote in April, 1920. In August, 1922, he wrote that "the century of democracy is finished. An aristocratic century, our century, succeeds the last. The state of the many ends by again becoming the state of the few. The new generations forbid democracy to encumber the path to the future with its cadaverous mass." After the conquest of power he sounded a different note. "For Fascism," he wrote, "the state is the absolute, before which individuals and groups are only relative." Such was the end of the parabola. I hope no one will dare to try to explain Mussolini's success by the clarity of his ideas on the subject of the state. Hitler's attitude to the state differs from that of Mussolini's. "The state is a means to an end," according to Hitler. "That end is the maintenance of the race." But these are purely verbal differences, by which the actual totalitarian character of the two states is in no way affected. In every other political ideology the thing of fundamental importance is the conception of the state. But in Fascist ideology of the period prior to the conquest of power it is of only secondary importance. Contradictory statements are made about it, and it is spoken of in vague mythological terms. Rosenberg in *Blut und Ehre* defined National-Socialism as "a movement of the people based on a new and yet ancient and long-established conception of blood-value." The blood-myth is "the secret harmony between blood and soul." Being secret, it is unanswerable. In the eyes of the faithful there is a supernatural quality about the atmosphere in which the mysteries are celebrated. "It is almost a transcendental world in which Hitler day by day fulfills his work for Germany," Dietrich wrote. Mussolini for his part declared that "we wish to save the values." He did not explain what values, so everyone could think that they referred to himself. "We are against

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renunciations, we are for our rights." "We are opposed to irresponsibility." Has there ever been anyone who was in favor of irresponsibility? The vaguer the formulas adopted by Fascist propaganda, the more effective they have turned out to be. In Fascist propaganda words are used not for their rational significance but for the images they are capable of calling up.

MR. W.

By the way, what does the cry "Eia! eia! alala!" mean?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

Nothing whatever. It was invented by D'Annunzio during the war. You will not find the words in any language or in any dialect, and even their inventor never attributed any rational meaning to them. Hence they had all the requisite qualities to become one of the sacred formulas of the Fascist liturgy. When they are yelled by an excited crowd they immediately take on an emotional significance, and can express stupor, ecstasy, supplication, prayer, or a desire for self-immolation, according to circumstances. Words such as these are far more valuable to a Fascist movement than any theoretical treatise on corporations. The very fact that they are nearly always made up of meaningless sounds is an impressive reminder of what the cries of the cavemen must have been like. You will have noticed yourselves that when shouted by a crowd *"Alala!"* dissolves into a prolonged "Ah!" *"A noi!"* into a prolonged "Oh!" *"Heil!"* into a prolonged "Ah!" "Ah!" and "Oh!" are the most elementary sounds. They are the first that are made by babies, and escape involuntarily from everyone to express pain or admiration. *"Alala! a noi!"* or *"Heil!"* are the liturgical formulas that begin and end every Fascist demonstration, and it is they that enshrine the significance and guarantee the efficacy of the rite. In the leader's mouth they acquire a magical significance. When Mussolini cries *"Eia! eia!"* or Hitler *"Heil!"* at a Fascist demonstration a tremor runs through the audience as at the announcement of salvation. The Buddhist formula. "Oh, jewel of the lotus," and the litanies of Christianity have never exercised more potency. The solemn recitation of unintelligible texts has always been a valuable resource of all religions. Sibylline language, by the mere fact of being incomprehensible, has always given believers the illusion of revealed truth, and the use of Latin has never discouraged illiterate peasants from attending Catholic services; on the contrary, it has always helped to attract them.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Do you suppose that Marx's *Capital* would have been so popular if it had been written in more intelligible language?

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THOMAS THE CYNIC

The saying *credo quia absurdum*—I believe because it is absurd, indicates a very widespread tendency among mankind; indeed, it is the same as their tendency to suggestion. No party, of course, has ever declined to exploit that human weakness, but Fascism has founded all its fortunes on it, creating a special modern technique for hypnotizing the masses.

MR. W.

In Berlin we met a certain Dr. Guterer, who is grand master of the ceremonies for the Nazis' public demonstrations. After talking to him I realized why the German churches and theaters are often deserted now. Choreography has been shifted to the market-place.

THOMAS THE CYNIC

The symbols and fetishes of the new idolatry also belong to the market-place; the eagles, the swastikas, the lictor's fasces, and the banners. Napoleon said, "Give me a button and I will make men die for it." Experience has shown that that is perfectly possible. Every Fascist or Nazi carries his party emblem in his button-hole, and is ready to give his life for it. The button serves to assure him of the supernatural power that it enshrines. It serves to distinguish the Fascist from other men, and assures him of his superiority over those unfortunates who do not possess it. Stories are told of Fascists who have kissed it at the point of death. Others are buried with it, as a pledge of security against the infernal powers. Others touch the brow of their new-born sons with it, so that they may grow up devoted to their country. The strength of Fascism is manifested at magical ceremonies in which the whole people takes part. A new flag ceases to be a pole with a piece of cloth attached to it when the Leader's deputy touches it with his fingers; the new party premises ceases to be an ordinary house when the Leader's deputy declares it open. For the poor, unfortunate people who are the victims of all this, the symbol ends by being confused with the thing it stands for. The flag no longer represents the country, it *is* the country, just as the Consecrated Host does not represent the body and the blood of Christ but *is* the body and the blood of Christ. All attempts to explain the efficacy of a fetish by its shape or color are futile. The strength of a fetish derives solely from the minds of those who worship it. The Nazi flag is big and red and the Italian Fascist flag is small and black, but they fulfill the same function with the same result.

PROFESSOR PICKUP

Why were their opponents' symbols less effective?

THOMAS THE CYNIC

The use of symbols by the Socialist and democratic parties is

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accompanied by an ideology that hinders, or at any rate does not help, their transformation into fetishes. In the worker's eyes Socialism stands for concrete things—his wages, his factory, his home. In his case his flag simply remains his flag. In Russia, however, the Soviet flag has become a fetish too. The process corresponded with the gradual liquidation of the soviets. However, even if the other parties, in spite of their different ideologies, did posses symbols of fetishistic value, they were systematically ridiculed by the Fascists and dishonered in the eyes of the masses. That is why the Italian Fascists used castor oil upon their opponents. They regarded the flowing black tie worn by many Italian Socialists as a crude materialization of the anti-patriotic idea, and, when circumstances permitted, the black tie was seized and burned and its impure wearer was forced to submit to a huge dose of castor oil, sometimes having to swallow as much as a liter of the stuff and remain in the public square until it had produced its effect. Thus did the Fascists eliminate the evil from the bodies of their opponents. These practices, like Fascist fetishism and mythology in general, were naturally only effective because of the nervousness and discouragement to which the masses were reduced as a consequence of the war, the economic crisis, and the failure of the Socialist attempts at revolution. The new savior presents himself to the masses in the guise of a new kind of demagogue, surrounded by the symbols and fetishes of patriotic mythology—eagles, swastikas, lictor's fasces, flags and banners, and with torches flaring in the breeze. He is not generally a great orator, and seems to be ignorant of the most elementary rules of the traditional art of public speaking; in some ways he reminds one of a war propagandist haranguing soldiers before going over the top, in others of the exact opposite, the raw leader of a band of mutinous soldiers. However, his vehement and uncultured improvisations serve to bring him closer to the masses, who end by hearing their own voice in him. There really is a Fascist kind of eloquence, false and artificial like every other. But when used upon masses who have known war and prolonged unemployment, it is infinitely more effective than the old "operatic" eloquence of Gambetta, Jaures, Lassalle, Enrico Ferri, Lloyd George. It is superior to the old in the way in which Al Jolson is superior to Caruso. Fascist eloquence is reinforced by the technique of Fascist propaganda, but it would be presumption on my part to talk of propaganda to Americans. . . .

MR. W.

Not for that reason. But it is very late, and if we are not careful we shall be too late for dinner.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC

Then I must say good-by. In any case you will not miss very much if I do not give you my comments on the technique of Fascist propaganda. As a matter of fact, I have not very much to say about it, the Germans in particular having dealt with it liberally in their writings, as of a thing which has no secrets.

The Beggars: Place Edmond Rostand

No longer stiff as trees,
their limbs like branches in the winter posture,
nor gray as walls, the ravaged supplicants
open and stir. Some, like monstrous flowers,
lift up their faces, blinded by so much light
from roof and street thrown back upon them; others, with march of turtles
and eyes of statuary, drift among velvet-breasted pigeons.

—Through all the winter months, alone on corners
or as they crept from rain to rain
they had the life-like lifeless look of tailors' figures,
mechanical and waxen.

As I went past I met their glance
and pictured that strange life which moves by clockwork,
marked by no anger, no surprise, no burst of laughter
but always grooved more deeply in exhaustion.—

No longer fixed, like stones
past which the honest citizen pursues his course,
nor bent as mandrake, like rich wounds they blossom.
Lost in great sculptural folds of rotten cloth
one sang, sang out with the crazy abandon of a bird
on summer's topmost branch—while all the others
mistrust the season's golden promise.
The warmth in which they shudder is too new,
winter, the shadowy forest grown their world,
too close behind them.

Tomorrow, when the sun beats down their fear,
drunken as birds, perhaps, and senseless with relief,
they will wander at random in all directions
or, in some wedge of light, sleep off the season
whose locked horizons outstretched past and future.

CLARK MILLS

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Topical Lyrics

Robert Fitzgerald

Rifle fire out of the East—a bitter
Range in the red sun, leveler of all
And shadower of men on the low hills

Greening above the mist: blue glacial shadows
Hollow to westward where the faces peer
On surgical terrains lit by the faint fire

Of spring and dawn and war:

Smoke drifting as a frost breath drifting
Home among the orchards: stir, encampments
Clanking with soft metal in the vast

Azure of danger:
hushed on the hot ground
Where one man's crying mouth breaks stones
Leaves, dusty earth, and shuts up soaking:

Flash at eye-lash, and the needle-bright bombers
Borne by scourging savagery of engines
In sensitive chevrons under purest cirrus

Drift and dream on:

II

We were never instructed in these quarrels.
The power and the inheritance were not ours,
Neither the whip-handle of any belted captain.
We fought against our fathers for our sport.

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At any filling station or small-town movie
We pulled on tunics, took the company pose.
Our factions rose and fell in opposing bleachers
On amber afternoons of frosty October.

All men were neither tigers nor our brothers.
All our lives were not divisions in charts.
All orators were not exclusively for us.
All countries oversea were distant to us as death.

III

When night has cast his dreadful shade
And the great sphere inclines
Eastward and weightless, grade by grade
Sacred Arcturus shines.

And cold as starlight through the grove
Where summer's windrows lie
The gliding firefly shines on love
With phosphorescent thigh.

But eastward where vast history wanes
The dust-cloud armies gleam
And Europe's dark magnetic plains
Glow under nodes of dream,

Whose ether fever's rippling prayer
Breaks on our Western sill.
Through all the sighing lands the fair
Sleepers will not be still.

IV

And the rifle butt falls on the shore
By the quiet path where yesterday's
Immaculate questioners
Tracked down desire. Think, child,
All that is done without remorse
In this sensuous summer dusk
Was dreamed then by the seedy dreamers.
O lakes where the green glaciers sleep,
O mountains fuming cloud,
Be mindful, remember their bondage.

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And the red priest who bears his oil
To the still bed in night time
Hears each tragedian weep.
Dear child, who should see paradise,
I'd thee absolve of thy mortality
That flourished from immortal time,
Like the cold root and cankered tree
That made Christ's blinding rood.
Or mother within mother—a winding sheet
Stained with rouge and blood.

The vacuum roars in the press rooms,
And the soft announcer's voice clips
Into a beating music.
By rivers, under footlighted cities,
The compact locomotives jostle
Luminous, loud in the night;
The wings of roaring funfighters
Waggle in grey cloud-hung squadrons:
Combustive music, power beyond power,
Rending and rest for the heart.

V

The clouds' procession, majesty and dispersal,
The wind that blows all day from the warm west,
The blue-grass pastures and the burnished corn
Undulant under the simmer of mid-summer;

The roughening miles of rye and the rippling wheat fields,
The red foal and the colt with the girl's eyes,
The sweet hay fallen, the clean swathe in the timothy,
The cattle under the elms by the cool water;

For this the old men fought with their crooked hands,
Plowing the loam crust in the bitter spring,
Getting their bellies full with the threshers' moon,
And warm wives bedded for the crackling winter.

Consider if your commerce on the great sea
Or over the frosty and exquisite mountains
Rumors the failure of these men and their land.
They waken every spring; they hold the passes;

Over the North and South their communion comes.

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VI

Caught in the notch of the sights and held there,
Screwed two points for wind . . . the frozen squirrel
Knocked down, adorable, from the walnut bough.

The Winchester also won the Indian wars
By bolt action and by force of repetition;
A sweet piece; sweet and hot for the cavalry
After ambrosial Custer's Colt grew cold.

Now rapid as woodpeckers in evening trees
Or riveters in shipyard; fed for percussion
Steel-jacketed decimals out of belts in boxes;
Wickedly weighted, bandy and low-slung,
These marvels beat the jungle's yellow eyes.
By night flame splinters from their searching muzzles—
Or when you see that dust kicked up, flop down.

Spider-legged lightning dances miles;
While yellow stormcloud and black sighing trees
Flare under his great riding, his fiery veins
Branch to dark earth in thunder.
The finer canned goods
Available in 500 lb. and one ton cylinders
By industrial logic make his strokes look tender.

This theatre is everywhere, all the world,
And all the men and women snapshots merely,
Lit by the cold instantaneous street scene.
When wind blows here there's bloody murder done—
Such separation of the cellular form
No ligatures will tie what's torn together.
The quiet earth of God
Spouting the solar gases: smoking and crying
Till comic sirens die in the silent newsreel.

VII

Friends, take a good look at this
Late lamented son of a bitch whose mama
And papa gave the boy all the advantages
Of a nice school and a university
Education and a nifty little
Chrysler all his own on his twenty-first

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Birthday; just step a little closer
O my friends, and examine this highly
Interesting, highly valued, highly
Civilized young fellow whose curly head
Was recently emptied permanently of all
Those highly captivating wise-cracks
Those little audacities all the girls used to
Love; O look here, friends,
His manly chest ain't human, no it ain't,
It's crawling just crawling with
Whatever it is that crawls all over a
Dead young fellow when he can't help
It; nope, the poor guy can't do a
Thing just as if he couldn't ever
Do anything and maybe that's a fact, buddy,
But it's a damn shame he has to spoil.

VIII

The sparrows chirping on the boulevards
And the velvet light on the lawns
In the old provinces.
Carriages covered in linen
And the horses' fetlocks twinkling,
The fine spokes glittering. Clop clop. Creak.

Then tenders of machines, valve readers, skilled
Oilers and handlers of waste, slow moving
Among shining and whining lathes and cutters.
"Here was his hand and there his fingers
Lay right over there." Trainmen in mist
Softly waving their lights;
The dusty builders in the stencil of sunlight.

To free those prisoned, defeated in cities:
To make of their many hands one iron pressure:
To unchain and train that power:

Scholars have risen from the world's disorder,
Sleepless when the stars fade, silent
Keepers of history, their bodily will
Geared to the majestic transit of heaven;
Pliant as whips, at ease in multitudes,
Beloved and unloving, responsible.

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They have given arms to the people.
They have made the people an army.
They have plotted the gun pits and the aerodromes.

Though they suckle thin breasts in the South
Or dangle sleigh ropes in the Christmas snow,
All is ordained for this earth's delicate children.
Or is it thus ordained?

Let them not serve abstraction with lies.
The power fails among the unperceptive,
The bitter captains brawl, the pilots rage,
And the great cities sift toward the streams.

Let their care be constantly at home,
Their marksmanship rare as justice.
Slowly may they learn the earth
In the mastered and peaceful seasons,
The new tongues, the literatures like spring;
Oh, let their rooms be caskets of the sun,
Unshaded by hauteur of towers;
Their russet hearths at evening
Be theatres to old men's eyes.

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Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art*

We can say without exaggeration that never has civilization been menaced so seriously as today. The Vandals, with instruments which were barbarous, and so comparatively ineffective, blotted out the culture of antiquity in one corner of Europe. But today we see world civilization, united in its historic destiny, reeling under the blows of reactionary forces armed with the entire arsenal of modern technology. We are by no means thinking only of the world war that draws near. Even in times of "peace," the position of art and science has become absolutely intolerable.

Insofar as it originates with an individual, insofar as it brings into play subjective talents to create something which brings about an objective enriching of culture, any philosophical, sociological, scientific or artistic discovery seems to be the fruit of a precious *chance,* that is to say, the manifestation, more or less spontaneous, of *necessity.* Such creations cannot be slighted, whether from the standpoint of general knowledge (which interprets the existing world), or of revolutionary knowledge (which, the better to change the world, requires an exact analysis of the laws which govern its movement). Specifically, we cannot remain indifferent to the intellectual conditions under which creative activity take place, nor should we fail to pay all respect to those particular laws which govern intellectual creation.

In the contemporary world we must recognize the ever more widespread destruction of those conditions under which intellectual creation is possible. From this follows of necessity an increasingly manifest degradation not only of the work of art but also of the specifically "artistic" personality. The regime of Hitler, now that it has rid Germany of all those artists whose work expressed the slightest sympathy for liberty, however superficial, has reduced those who still consent to take up pen or brush to the status of domestic servants of the regime, whose task it is to glorify it on order, according to the worst possible esthetic conventions. If reports may be believed, it is the same in the Soviet Union, where Thermidorean reaction is now reaching its climax.

* *See Editorial Note, Page 7.*

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It goes without saying that we do not identify ourselves with the currently fashionable catchword: "Neither fascism nor communism!"a shibboleth which suits the temperament of the Philistine, conservative and frightened, clinging to the tattered remnants of the "democratic" past. True art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time—true art is unable *not* to be revolutionary, *not* to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society. This it must do, were it only to deliver intellectual creation from the chains which bind it, and to allow all mankind to raise itself to those heights which only isolated geniuses have achieved in the past. We recognize that only the social revolution can sweep clear the path for a new culture. If, however, we reject all solidarity with the bureaucracy now in control of the Soviet Union, it is precisely because, in our eyes, it represents not communism but its most treacherous and dangerous enemy.

The totalitarian regime of the U.S.S.R., working through the so-called "cultural" organizations it controls in other countries, has spread over the entire world a deep twilight hostile to every sort of spiritual value. A twilight of filth and blood in which, disguised as intellectuals and artists, those men steep themselves who have made of servility a career, of lying for pay a custom, and of the palliation of crime a source of pleasure. The official art of Stalinism mirrors with a blatancy unexampled in history their efforts to put a good face on their mercenary profession.

The repugnance which this shameful negation of the principles of art inspires in the artistic world—a negation which even slave states have never dared carry so far—should give rise to an active, uncompromising condemnation. The *opposition* of writers and artists is one of the forces which can usefully contribute to the discrediting and overthrow of regimes which are destroying, along with the right of the proletariat to aspire to a better world, every sentiment of nobility and even of human dignity.

The communist revolution is not afraid of art. It realizes that the role of the artist in a decadent capitalist society is determined by the conflict between the individual and various social forms which are hostile to him. This fact alone, insofar as he is conscious of it, makes the artist the natural ally of revolution. The process of *sublimation,* which here comes into play, and which psychoanalysis has analyzed, tries to restore the broken equilibrium between the integral "ego" and the outside elements it rejects. This restoration works to the advantage of the "ideal of self," which marshals against the unbearable present reality all those powers of the interior world, of the "self,"

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which are *common to all men* and which are constantly flowering and developing. The need for emancipation felt by the individual spirit has only to follow its natural course to be led to mingle its stream with this primeval necessity: the need for the emancipation of man.

The conception of the writer's function which the young Marx worked out is worth recalling. "The writer," he declared, "naturally must make money in order to live and write, but he should not under any circumstances live and write in order to make money . . . The writer by no means looks on his works as a *means.* It is *an end in itself* and so little a means in the eyes of himself and of others that if necessary he sacrifices his existence to the existence of his work. . . . *The first condition of the freedom of the press is that it is not a business activity.*" It is more than ever fitting to use this statement against those who would regiment intellectual activity in the direction of ends foreign to itself, and prescribe, in the guise of so-called "reasons of State," the themes of art. The free choice of these themes and the absence of all restrictions on the range of his explorations—these are possessions which the artist has a right to claim as inalienable. In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape from all constraint and must, under no pretext, allow itself to be placed under bonds. To those who would urge us, whether for today or for tomorrow, to consent that art should submit to a discipline which we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal, and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula: *complete freedom for art.*

We recognize, of course, that the revolutionary State has the right to defend itself against the counter-attack of the bourgeoisie, even when this drapes itself in the flag of science or art. But there is an abyss between these enforced and temporary measures of revolutionary self-defense and the pretension to lay commands on intellectual creation. If, for the better development of the forces of material production, the revolution must build a *socialist* regime with centralized control, to develop intellectual creation an *anarchist* regime of individual liberty should from the first be established. No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above! Only on a base of friendly cooperation, without the constraint from outside, will it be possible for scholars and artists to carry out their tasks, which will be more far-reaching than ever before in history.

It should be clear by now that in defending freedom of thought we have no intention of justifying political indifference, and that it is far from our wish to revive a so-called "pure" art which generally serves the extremely impure ends of reaction. No, our conception of

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the role of art is too high to refuse it an influence on the fate of society. We believe that the supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution. But the artist cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art.

In the present period of the death agony of capitalism, democratic as well as fascist, the artist sees himself threatened with the loss of his right to live and continue working. He sees all avenues of communication choked with the debris of capitalist collapse. Only naturally, he turns to the Stalinist organizations, which hold out the possibility of escaping from his isolation. But if he is to avoid complete demoralization, he cannot remain there, because of the impossibility of delivering his own message and the degrading servility which these organizations exact from him in exchange for certain material advantages. He must understand that his place is elsewhere, not among those who betray the cause of the revolution and of mankind, but among those who with unshaken fidelity bear witness to this revolution, among those who, for this reason, are alone able to bring it to fruition, and along with it the ultimate free expression of all forms of human genius.

The aim of this appeal is to find a common ground on which may be reunited all revolutionary writers and artists, the better to serve the revolution by their art and to defend the liberty of that art itself against the usurpers of the revolution. We believe that esthetic, philosophical and political tendencies of the most varied sort can find here a common ground. Marxists can march here hand in hand with anarchists, provided both parties uncompromisingly reject the reactionary police-patrol spirit represented by Joseph Stalin and by his henchman, Garcia Oliver.

We know very well that thousands on thousands of isolated thinkers and artists are today scattered throughout the world, their voices drowned out by the loud choruses of well-disciplined liars. Hundreds of small local magazines are trying to gather youthful forces about them, seeking new paths and not subsidies. Every progressive tendency in art is destroyed by fascism as "degenerate." Every free creation is called "fascist" by the Stalinists. Independent revolutionary art must now gather its forces for the struggle against reactionary persecution. It must proclaim aloud its right to exist. Such a union of forces is the aim of the *International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art* which we believe it is now necessary to form.

We by no means insist on every idea put forth in this manifesto, which we ourselves consider only a first step in the new direction. We

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urge every friend and defender of art, who cannot but realize the necessity for this appeal, to make himself heard at once. We address the same appeal to all those publications of the left-wing which are ready to participate in the creation of the International Federation and to consider its task and its methods of action.

When a preliminary international contact has been established through the press and by correspondence, we will proceed to the organization of local and national congresses on a modest scale. The final step will be the assembling of a world congress which will officially mark the foundation of the International Federation.

Our aims:

The independence of art—for the revolution;

The revolution—for the complete liberation of art!

ANDRÉ BRETON
DIEGO RIVERA

(Translated by Dwight Macdonald)

Sewing Loft

Here, madam, is our summer: heatwave yellow
flooding those dusty windows opened south.
Stale air that traffics alleysmells (pale fellow
of chimneysmoke) drifts in to nose and mouth:
on which no man pays taxes. Here are kept
the swollen hours for which our eyes have wept.

And these are the machines at which we serve
apprenticeship to time, these are the chairs
on which our bones absorb the aches that curve
our bodies deathward. Fingers push damp hair
and watery sweatdrops out of eyes that ache,
pinned to the speed our flickering needles make.

There, madam, on the wall: unlidded eye,
the timeclock stares, computing our spent days;
compounds each hour as it limps goodby,
and points release at six o'clock. Today's
tired eyes look up; hard hands brake wheels down slow:
but piecework cheats the body's cry to go.

WILLIAM STEPHENS

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Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor

Franz Kafka

Blumfeld, an elderly bachelor, climbed one evening up to his rooms—a wearisome task, for he lived on the sixth floor. During his climb he thought, as so often in recent times, that he now had to climb these six stories in utter privacy only to reach his empty rooms above, and there, again in utter privacy, to put on his dressing gown, light his pipe, read a little in the French newspaper he had subscribed to for years, sip a little at a cherry brandy he had himself prepared, and finally, after a half hour, to go to bed,—not without first having completely to rearrange his bedclothes, which the charwoman, intractable to all instructions, always threw down according to her temper. Any companion, any onlooker at all for these activities, would have been very welcome to Blumfeld. He had already considered whether he ought not to buy a little dog. Such an animal is happy, and above all grateful and loyal. A colleague of Blumfeld has just such a dog, who follows no one but his master, and when he has not seen him for a few moments, welcomes him back with great barkings, plainly trying to express his joy over having once more found that extraordinary benefactor, his master. To be sure, a dog has disadvantages, too. No matter how clean he keeps himself, he dirties the room. That is not to be avoided; one can not bathe him in hot water every time before taking him into the room; furthermore, his health would not stand it. But Blumfeld, in turn, can not stand dirtiness in his room; the cleanliness of his room is something absolutely necessary to him. Again and again throughout the week he quarrels with the charwoman, who is not, unfortunately, over particular in this point. Since she is hard of hearing, he usually draws her along by the arm to those places in the room where he has some fault to find in the tidiness. Through this severity he has managed to obtain an order in the room corresponding approximately to his wishes. With the introduction of a dog, however, he would straightway, and of his own will, bring into the room the filth he had thus far so carefully avoided. Fleas, the constant companions of dogs, would move in. And once fleas were there, the moment would not be far distant when Blumfeld would abandon his comfortable room to the dog and seek another.

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Dirtiness, however, was only one disadvantage of a dog. Dogs also get sick, and no one, really, understands dog maladies. Then this animal cowers in a corner, or hobbles around, whimpers, hacks, retches with some pain or other; one wraps it in a cover, whistles it a tune, shoves it some milk,—in short, nurses it in the hope—however that may be possible—that it is a question of a passing illness, while actually it may be a disgusting and serious infectious disease. But even though the dog remains healthy, later on he will grow suddenly old. One can not decide to give him away at the proper time; and then comes the day when one's own age looks out at one from the teary eyes of the dog. Then one has to be tormented by the animal, half-blind, weak-lunged and almost immoveable in its fat, and pay dearly for the pleasures it had formerly brought. As much as Blumfeld would like to have a dog at the moment, he would rather climb the stairs alone for another thirty years than be burdened with an old dog like that, who, groaning more loudly even than himself, would drag itself up behind him step by step.

So Blumfeld decides to stay alone. He has none of the hankerings of an old maid who has to have some inferior living being about her that she can treasure and be tender with and constantly serve, so that a cat, a canary, or even a goldfish suffice her purpose. And if that proves impossible, she is even content with flowers in the window. Blumfeld, on the contrary, wants only one companion, an animal which will not give him much trouble, which an occasional kick will not harm, which can even spend the night in the street if necessary, but which, if he so desires, will be at his disposal, barking, jumping up on him, and licking his hands. Something of the sort Blumfeld wants, but since he can not have it, as he sees, without disadvantages all too great, he renounces it; yet in keeping with his fundamental disposition he returns from time to time—as, for instance, this very evening—to the same thought.

Upon reaching the door to his room upstairs and taking the key from his pocket, he hears a slight noise coming from within. A peculiar rattling noise, but very lively and very regular. Since he has just been thinking of dogs, it reminds him of the noise that paws make when striking by turns on the floor. But paws do not rattle; it is not paws, then. He opens the door hurriedly and turns on the electric light. He was hardly prepared for this sight. This is magic: two small, white, blue-striped balls of celluloid are bouncing up and down beside each other on the floor; as one is striking the floor, the other is in the air, and tirelessly they carry on their play. Once in the grammar school during a well-known electrical experiment Blumfeld had seen small spheres bouncing in a like manner, but these are com-

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paratively big balls, bouncing in the open room, and there is no electrical experiment being performed. Blumfeld bends down to look at them more closely. They are without doubt ordinary balls; they probably have inside them some still smaller balls and these produce the rattling noise. Blumfeld snatches in the air to make certain they are not hanging by some thread. No, they are moving entirely on their own. What a pity Blumfeld is not a little child; two balls like these would have been a happy surprise for him, while as it is the whole affair makes a rather disagreeable impression. Still, it is not entirely without value to live only in private as an inconspicuous bachelor; for now someone, no matter who, has relieved this privacy and sent in to him these two comical balls.

He tries to catch one, but they give way before him and lure him into the room behind. It is so stupid, he thinks, to run after the balls in this way; he stands still and watches how, once the chase seems abandoned, they stay in the same spot. I'm going to try to catch them all the same, he thinks once more, and hurries after them. They instantly take flight, but spreading his legs, Blumfeld crowds them into a corner, and in front of the chest that stands there succeeds in catching one ball. It is a cool little ball and twists about in his hand, obviously trying to escape. And the other ball, when it sees the plight of its comrade, bounces even higher than before, extending its leaps till it touches Blumfeld's hand. It strikes against his hand, strikes in constantly quicker bounds; then changes its point of attack and since it can do nothing against the hand that entirely encloses the ball, leaps still higher, apparently trying to reach Blumfeld's face. Blumfeld could have caught this ball, too, and locked them both away somewhere; but at the moment it seems too degrading to take such mass measures against two little balls. It is even a joke for him to possess two such balls. Furthermore, they will soon get tired and roll under a chest and be still. But despite this consideration Blumfeld throws the ball to the floor with a kind of contempt; it is a wonder that the frail, almost transparent shell did not shatter to bits. Without pause the two balls again take up their low, mutually discordant bouncing as before.

Blumfeld undresses quietly and arranges his clothes in the wardrobe; he always looks to see if the charwoman has left everything in order. Once or twice he looks over his shoulder at the balls, which, now free of pursuit, seem even to be pursuing him; they have followed him and are now bouncing away right behind him. Blumfeld puts on his dressing gown and then feels like crossing over to the opposite wall to get one of his pipes, which are hanging there in a rack. Before turning round, he involuntarily strikes out behind with one foot,

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but the balls know how to elude him and escape being hit. Now as he goes for his pipe, they follow right after; he shuffles along with his slippers, takes irregular strides, but still the impact of the balls follows upon every step, almost without pause, keeping pace with him step for step. Blumfeld whirls about suddenly to see how they manage this. But scarcely has he turned around than the balls describe a semicircle and are already behind him again; and that is repeated as often as he turns. Like menials they try to avoid staying in front of him. Up to the moment they have only dared, apparently, to introduce themselves to him, but now they have already entered upon their service.

In all exceptional cases before this, where his strength was not equal to mastering a situation, Blumfeld has always chosen the stopgap of acting as though he noticed nothing amiss. It has often helped, and in most cases has at least improved the situation. So he now behaves accordingly; stands before the pipe-rack, selects, with pursed lips, a pipe, packs it especially solid out of the tobacco pouch ready at hand, and serenely lets the balls go on bouncing behind him. But he delays going to the table. To hear the measured beat of the bouncing and his own footsteps almost pains him. So he stands there packing his pipe for a needlessly long time and estimating the distance that separates him from the table. Finally, however, he overcomes his weakness and travels the distance back with such stampings that he doesn't hear the balls at all. When he sits down, they bounce behind his chair, once again as audible as before.

Within reach above the table is a shelf set into the wall, on which stands the decanter of cherry brandy, surrounded by little glasses. Next to it lies a bundle of issues of the French newspaper. (Only today a new number arrived, and Blumfeld now takes it down. The brandy he forgets completely; he even has the feeling that today he would not let himself be kept from his usual habits except out of solace; furthermore, he has no real need to read. Contrary to his usual custom of leafing through the paper page by page, he opens it to a convenient place, and finds there a large photograph. He forces himself to examine it more closely. It represents the meeting between the Czar of Russia and the President of France. It is taking place aboard a ship. Roundabout in the distance there are many other ships, the smoke from their funnels vanishing into the clear sky. Both the Czar and the President have just hastened forward to meet each other and are now shaking hands. Behind the Czar, and behind the President as well, stand two gentlemen. In contrast to the happy faces of the Czar and the President, the faces of their companions are very serious. The glances of both groups of companions are centered on

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their chiefs. Lower down—the event is obviously taking place on the topmost deck of the ship—are standing long rows of sailors at salute, which are cut off by the edge of the picture. Gradually Blumfeld examines the photograph with greater interest; then holds it a little distance away and looks at it with blinking eyes. He has always had a great feeling for such magnificent scenes. That the principal persons clasp each other's hands with such ease, so cordially and carelessly, he finds very true to life. And equally correct that their companions—naturally very high personages in other respects, whose names are recorded below—preserve in their bearing the seriousness of the historical moment.

Instead of getting down everything he needs, Blumfeld sits motionless and stares into the bowl of his still unlighted pipe. He is on the lookout. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, his rigidity gives way, and with a jerk of his chair he whirls about. But either the balls are correspondingly on the watch or follow instinctively the law that controls them, for simultaneously with Blumfeld's turning round they, too, change place and hide behind his back. Blumfeld now sits with his back to the table, his cold pipe in his hand. The balls at the moment are bouncing under the table, and since there is a rug there, are only barely audible. That is a great advantage. The noises are quite weak and muffled; indeed, one has to give particular heed to detect them. Blumfeld, of course, is very attentive and hears them distinctly. But this is only for the moment; in a little while he will probably not be able to hear them at all. It seems to Blumfeld to be a great failing on the part of the balls that they can become so little noticeable on rugs. One has only to shove under them one—or better still—two rugs and they are practically powerless. Only for a time, of course; and over and above that, their very existence already indicates a certain power.

At the moment Blumfeld could well use a dog; such a fierce, young animal would soon make short work of the balls. He imagines how this dog would swipe at them with his paws, how he would drive them from their place, chase them back and forth through the room, and finally get them between his teeth. It is quite possible that Blumfeld will get a dog very soon now.

For the time being, however, the balls have only Blumfeld to fear, and he has no desire at the moment to disturb them; or perhaps he simply lacks the resolution for it. He comes home in the evening tired from work, and now just when he needs quiet, this surprise is awaiting him. For the first time he feels how tired he really is. He will positively destroy the balls, and very quickly, too; but not this moment, and probably not till the next day. If one looks at the whole

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affair without prejudice, the balls behave discreetly enough after all. They could, for instance, leap out from time to time, show themselves, and again retreat to their place, or they could bounce higher in order to hit the table-top and so compensate themselves for being muffled by the rug. But they do not; they don't want to irritate Blumfeld needlessly. Obviously, they confine themselves to what is absolutely necessary.

To be sure, even what is absolutely necessary is enough to spoil Blumfeld's lingering at the table. He has been sitting there for only a few minutes when already he begins to think of going to bed. One of the inducements is that he can not smoke here, for he has laid the matches on the night table. But he would certainly have these matches once he was by the night table; it is surely much better to go over there and lie down. Also, he has still another thought in the back of his mind; that is that the balls in their blind effort to keep constantly behind him will bounce up on the bed so that when he then goes to lie down, he will, purposely or not, squash them. The objection that the remains of the balls might still go on bouncing he refuses to accept. Even the extraordinary must have its limits. Undamaged balls bounce anyway, even though not incessantly; fragments of balls, on the other hand, never bounce and hence will not bounce here either.

"Up, then!" he cries, almost elated by these thoughts, and stamps off to bed with the balls once more behind him. His hopes seem about to be fulfilled when, upon his purposely placing himself near the bed, one ball straightway bounces up on it. But then the unforeseen happens when the other ball betakes itself under the bed. The possibility that the balls could even bounce under the bed never occurred to Blumfeld He is provoked with the ball, though he feels how unjust that is; perhaps in bouncing under the bed it fulfills its mission better than the ball on top of the bed Everything now depends on what place the balls will decide upon for Blumfeld hardly believes they could work for long separately. The next moment, in fact, the other ball also bounces up on the bed. Now I have them, thinks Blumfeld, hot with joy, and tears off his dressing gown to throw himself into bed. But the same ball promptly bounces back under the bed again. Enormously disappointed, Blumfeld collapses altogether. Probably the ball only looked around overhead and didn't like it. Now the other one follows it, too, and, of course, remains below for it is better down there. "Now I'll have these drummers here all night," thinks Blumfeld, biting his lips and shaking his head.

He is sad without really knowing how the balls could bother him during the night. He sleeps excellently well and will surely be able to overlook the slight noise. To make sure of this, he shoves two

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rugs under them in accordance with his recent experience. It is as if he had a little dog that he wants to bed comfortably. And as though the balls, too, were tired and sleepy, their bouncings become lower and more slow. When Blumfeld kneels down beside the bed and lights under it with his night lamp, the balls are falling so faintly, rolling here and there so slowly, that for a moment he thinks they will lie forgotten there on the carpet forever. But then, of course, they start up again as though in duty bound. It is quite possible, however, that if Blumfeld looks under the bed early in the morning, he will find there two quiet, harmless toy balls.

But apparently they can not even prolong their bouncing till morning, for as soon as Blumfeld gets into bed, he can no longer hear them at all. He strains to hear something, leans forward out of the bed and listens—not a sound. The rugs can hardly work so well; the only explanation is that the balls are no longer bouncing. Either they cannot get sufficient upspring from the soft rugs and have therefore given up their bouncing for the time being, or—what is more probable—they are never going to bounce again. Blumfeld could get up to see how matters really stand, but in his contentment that it is finally quiet, he prefers to stay where he is; he does not want to disturb the now quiet balls with so much as a glance. He gladly foregoes even his smoking, turns over on his side, and goes right to sleep.

He does not remain undisturbed, however; as always, his sleep is dreamless, but very restless. Countless times during the night he is aroused by the illusion that someone is knocking at the door. He knows perfectly well that no one is knocking; who would want to knock in the middle of the night and on his, a lonely bachelor's door. But though he knows this perfectly well, he still starts up each time and stares intensely at the door for a moment, his mouth open, his eyes wide, and strands of hair trembling on his moist forehead. He tries to count how many times he is wakened; but dazed with the huge figures he gets, he falls back to sleep again. He thinks he knows where the knocking comes from; it is not at the door, but someplace else entirely; yet caught in the toils of sleep, he can not recall what his suspicions are based on. He only knows that many tiny malicious rappings gather together before giving out the big, violent knocking. He would even gladly endure all the malice of the little rappings if he could escape the knocking; but somehow it is too late, he can get no hold here, he has missed his chance. Not once has he found his voice; his mouth opens but only in silent yawns; and raging at his impotence, he plunges his face into the pillows. And so the night goes by.

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In the morning the knocking of the charwoman wakens him. Though he has always before complained of its faintness, he greets the soft knocking with a sigh of relief, and is already about to call "Come in," when he hears still another knocking, weak, but lively and positively militant. It is the balls under the bed. Are they awake, then? Have they—in contrast to himself—gathered new strength over night? "Just a moment," Blumfeld cries out to the servant, and leaps out of bed, but cautionsly, so as to keep the balls behind him, and throwing himself on the floor, always with his back to the balls, twists his head about, looks at them, and—could almost have cursed. Like children who push off their heavy covers during the night, the balls have shoved the rugs far forward under the bed, probably by tugging at them with little jerks all night long, so that now they have the bare floor under them again and can go on making noise. "Back on the rugs with you," says Blumfeld angrily, and then, when thanks to the rugs the balls are again quiet, calls to the charwoman to come in. She is a fat, stupid woman who always goes about stiffly erect. While she is setting out breakfast on the table and making a few necessary preparations, Blumfeld stands motionless beside the bed so as to confine the balls beneath it. He follows the charwoman with his eyes to make certain whether she notices anything. With her hardness of hearing it is very unlikely, and Blumfeld ascribes it to his nervousness from the wretched night just past when he thinks he sees her stopping here and there, coming to a halt by some piece of furniture and listening with raised brows. He would be glad if he could get the woman to hurry her work a little, but she is almost slower than usual. Ceremoniously she loads herself down with Blumfeld's clothes and shoes, and withdrawing with them into the corridor, stays away for some time. The sound of her brushing comes through the door, monotonous and sporadic. All his time Blumfeld has to hold out by the bed, not daring to move lest he draw the balls after him; must watch his coffee, which he likes to drink as hot as possible, cool off; and can do nothing but stare at the lowered curtains, behind which the day is beginning to glimmer. At last the charwoman is finished, wishes him a good morning, and is already about to depart. But before finally leaving, she stops by the door, moving her lips a little and giving Blumfeld a long look. He is just on the point of calling her to account, when at last she actually goes out. Blumfeld would like nothing better than to fling open the door and shout after her what a dull, stupid, old woman she is. But when he stops to think what he really has against her, he discovers only the absurdity that she doubtless noticed nothing and simply wanted to appear as though she had. His thoughts are so confused! And only because of a bad night! He manages to find some explana-

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tion for his wretched sleep in that yesterday evening he departed from his usual habits, and had neither smoked nor drunk his brandy. If I once—and this is the upshot of his reflection—if I once miss my smoke and brandy, I sleep badly.

From now on he intends to take better care of his comfort, and begins by taking some batting from the medicine chest hanging over the night table and stuffing two little wads of it into his ears. Then he stands up and takes a trial step. The balls follow, of course, but he scarcely hears them; another bit of wadding makes them completely inaudible. Blumfeld takes a few more steps forward; it goes without any particular inconvenience. Each for himself, then, Blumfeld as well as the balls; they are bound to one another, to be sure, but they do not disturb each other. Only when Blumfeld turns round once more quickly than usual and one of the balls is not quick enough in its counter-movement, he hits it with his knee. That is the only accident. For the rest, Blumfeld drinks his coffee quietly—he is as hungry as though instead of sleeping the night before he had made a long journey—then washes in cold, uncommonly refreshing water and dresses himself. Till now he has not raised the curtains very high, but from caution preferred to have it gloomy; he has no particular need to see the balls. But now that he is ready to take his leave, he must make some kind of provision for them in case they should dare—he hardly believes they would—follow him into the street. For this he has a good idea; opening the big clothes closet, he stands with his back to it. The balls, as though they had a suspicion of what he intends, are wary of the inside of the closet, and use every little space lying between Blumfeld and the threshhold, bouncing into the closet for a moment when it is safe, but instantly rushing out again before the darkness. By no means are they to be maneuvered over the sill and farther into the closet; they would rather violate their duty and stay at his side. But their little tricks will not help them, for now Blumfeld himself steps backward into the closet and they must follow regardless. This clinches matters, for on the floor inside lie various little objects, such as shoes, boxes, and small chests, which are all—for the first time to Blumfeld's regret—very neaty arranged, but which still hamper the balls seriously. And now, when Blumfeld, who has meanwhile almost closed the door, bounds out with a leap such as he has not attempted for years, slams the door behind him and turns the key, the balls are trapped. "So, it succeeded," he thinks, wiping the sweat from his face. What a racket the balls are making in the closet! It sounds as if they were desperate. Blumfeld, on the contrary, is very content. He leaves the room, and even the empty corridor does him good. He takes the wadding from his ears and finds the noises of the awakening house de-

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lightful. There are only a few people in sight, for it is still very early.

Below in the entrance hall in front of the door leading to the basement apartment of the charwoman, stands the little ten-year-old boy. An exact image of his mother, none of her ugliness has been forgotten in the face of her child. Bandy-legged, hands in his trouser pockets, he stands there and wheezes, because he already has a goitre and can breathe only with difficulty. Although Blumfeld usually steps along more hurriedly when he meets the boy so as to spare himself the spectacle as much as possible, today he almost feels like stopping beside him. Even though the boy was brought into the world by this woman and bears every mark of his origin, he is nonetheless a child for the time being; there are still childish thoughts in this misshapen head, and if one speaks to him sympathetically and asks him some questions, he would probably answer in a clear voice, innocently and with respect, and with a little effort one would even be able to stroke these cheeks. Such are Blumfeld's thoughts, but he passes him by nonetheless. In the street he notices that the weather is more cheerful than he had thought while in his room. The morning mists are separating, and blue streaks appear in the wind-swept sky. Blumfeld owes it to the balls that he has left his room much earlier than usual; he even left his newspaper unread on the table, but he has gained a good deal of time thereby and can now walk along slowly. It is remarkable how little worry the balls have given him since he parted with them. So long as they followed right behind him, one could have taken them for something actually belonging to him, for something that by some judgment on his person had somehow to be towed along with him; whereas now they were only a toy at home in the closet. At this it occurs to Blumfeld that perhaps he could best make the balls harmless by introducing them to their real calling. The boy is still standing there in the hallway; Blumfeld will give the balls to him, not, of course, by lending them to him, but by expressly making a gift of them, which surely amounts to the same thing as ordering their destruction. And even should they stay intact, still, in the hands of the boy they will mean much less than if they remained in the closet; the whole house will see the boy playing with them, and other children will join in, so that the general opinion will hold, firm and irrefutable, that it is a question in this matter of toy balls and not at all of Blumfeld's life partners. Blumfeld runs back into the house. The boy has just gone down the cellar steps and is trying to open the door below, so Blumfeld has to call him and pronounce his name, which like everything else about him is laughable. "Alfred, Alfred," he calls. The boy still loiters. "Come along," Blumfeld cries out, "I have something to give you." The care-

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taker's two little girls come out of the door across the hall and take their places, full of curiosity, on either side of Blumfeld. They take the situation in much quicker than the boy and can not understand why he does not come at once. Without taking their eyes off Blumfeld, they beckon to Alfred, but can not fathom what it is he expects for a present. Their curiosity torments them and they hop from one foot to the other. Blumfeld laughs at them, as well as the boy. The latter seems at last to have set everything straight in his own mind and stiff and awkward, climbs up the steps. Not even in his gait does he belie his mother, who, for her part, now appears in the cellar door below. Blumfeld calls out overloudly so she will understand him and, should it prove necessary, be able to supervise the execution of his orders. "Upstairs in my room," says Blumfeld, "I have two fine balls. Do you want them?" The boy simply makes a wry face; he doesn't know how to act; he turns round and looks down at his mother questioningly. The little girls, however, at once begin to jump around Blumfeld and beg for the balls. "You may play with them, too," he says, but waits for the boy's reply. He could as easily give the balls to the little girls, but they seem too frivolous, and at the moment he has more confidence in the boy. The latter, in the meantime, without any words being exchanged, has taken counsel with his mother, and in reply to Blumfeld's repeated question, nods his assent. "Then pay attention," says Blumfeld, gladly making allowances for not receiving any thanks for his gift, "your mother has the key to my room, which you must borrow from her; here is the key to my clothes closet, and in the clothes closet are the balls. Lock up the closet and the room again carefully. You can do what you want with the balls, only you must not bring them back again. Do you understand?" But the boy, unfortunately, has not understood. Blumfeld wanted to make everything especially clear to this infinitely uncomprehending being, but precisely because of this he has repeated everything too often, by turns mentioned keys, room and closet so often that the boy stares at him, not as though at a benefactor, but rather as at a tempter. The little girls, who, of course, have understood everything, crowd around Blumfeld stretching out their hands for the key. "Wait a moment," he says, beginning to be annoyed over the whole affair. Time is passing and he can not delay much longer. If only the charwoman would finally say she has understood him and will manage everything for the boy properly. But instead, she continues to stand at the cellar door below, smiling affectedly as timid deaf people do, and thinking, perhaps, that Blumfeld up there has suddenly gone into raptures over her boy and is hearing him in one of his fairy tales. Blumfeld, for his part, can not climb down

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the cellar stairs and shout his entreaties into the charwoman's ear, begging her in God's mercy to let her boy help free him from the balls. He has already disciplined himself enough by trusting this family with the key to his clothes closet for a whole day. So as not to indulge himself, he gives the boy the key immediately, instead of himself leading him upstairs and giving the balls to him there. But he can not first give away the balls, and then at once, as would probably have to happen, take them away from the boy again by attracting them after him like a retinue. "Then you still don't understand me?" asks Blumfeld almost sadly, after trying a new explanation which has likewise fallen to pieces under the boy's empty stare. An empty stare like that leaves one defenceless. It would seduce one into saying more than one intends, if one could only thereby fill that emptiness with understanding. "We'll get the balls for him," cry the little girls. They have realized that they can get the balls only by acting as agents for the boy, and furthermore, that they must bring about this agency by themselves. A clock strikes in the caretaker's room, warning Blumfeld to hurry. "Then take the key," he says, not so much delivering the key, as having it snatched out of his hand. The confidence with which he would have given it to the boy would have been infinitely greater. "Get the key to the room from the lady downstairs," he adds, "and as soon as as you come back with the balls, you must give the lady both keys." "All right!" cry the little girls, and run off down the steps to the basement. They know everything, absolutely everything; and now Blumfeld himself, as if infected by the boy's incomprehension, can hardly understand how they could have taken in his explanations so quickly.

At the moment they are tugging at the charwoman's skirt, but tempting though it is, Blumfeld can no longer watch to see how they will go about executing their task; not only, indeed, because it is already late, but also because he does not want to be present when the balls are set free. In fact, he would rather be already several streets away when the girls first open the door of his room upstairs. He has no idea of what more to expect of the balls. So for the second time he goes out into the open. He has just seen the charwoman defending herself, as it were, against the little girls and the boy bestirring his crooked legs to hurry to his mother's help. Blumfeld can not imagine why such people as the charwoman thrive and multiply in the world.

(*To be concluded in the WINTER issue*)

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The Myth of the Marxist Dialectic

Edmund Wilson

KARL MARX and Friedrich Engels called their philosophy "Dialectical Materialism"; and this name has had the unfortunate effect of misleading the ordinary person in regard to the implications of Marxism, since in this label neither the word *dialectical* nor the word *materialism* is used in the ordinary sense.

The "Dialectic" of which Marx and Engels talked was not the argumentative method of Socrates, but a principle of change conceived by Hegel. The "dialectic" exploited by Plato was a technique of arriving at truth by reconciling two opposite statements; the "Dialectic" of Hegel was a law which also involved contradiction and reconciliation but which was imagined by Hegel as operating not only in the processes of logic but also in those of the natural world and in those of human history. The world is always changing, says Hegel; but its changes have this element of uniformity: that each of them must pass through a cycle of three phases.

The first of these, called by Hegel the *thesis,* is a process of affirmation and unification; the second, the *antithesis,* is a process of splitting off from the thesis and negating it; the third is a new unification, which reconciles the antithesis with the thesis and is known as the *synthesis.* These cycles are not simple recurrences, which leave the world the same as it was before: the synthesis is always an advance over the thesis, for it combines in a "higher" unification the best features of both the thesis and the antithesis. Thus, for Hegel, the unification represented by the early Roman Republic was a thesis. This prime unification had been accomplished by great patriots of the type of the Scipios; but now the type of the unifying Roman patriot, persisting, takes on a different character: it turns into the "colossal individuality" of the age of Caesar and Pompey, an individuality which tends to disrupt the State in proportion as the republican order begins to decay under the influence of Roman prosperity—this is the antithesis which breaks off from the thesis. But at last Julius Caesar puts down his rivals, the other colossal individualities, and imposes upon Roman civilization a new order which is autocratic, a synthesis, which effects a larger unification: the Roman Empire.

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Marx and Engels took this principle over, and they projected its action into the future as Hegel had not done. For them, the thesis was bourgeois society, which had originally been a unification out of the disintegrating feudal regime; the antithesis was the proletariat, who had originally been produced by the development of modern industry, but who had then been split off through specialization and debasement from the main body of modern society and who must eventually be turned against it; and the synthesis would be the communist society which would result from the conflict of the working class with the owning and employing classes and the taking-over of the industrial plant by the working class, and which would represent a higher unity because it would harmonize the interests of all mankind.

Let us pass now to the materialistic aspect of the Dialectical Materialism of Marxism. Hegel had been a philosophical idealist: he had regarded historical changes as the steps by which something called the Absolute Idea achieved progressive self-realization in the medium of the material world. Marx and Engels turned Hegel upside down, as they said, and so set him for the first time right side up. "For Hegel," writes Marx in "Capital," "the process of thought, which, under the name of the Idea, he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurge of the real world, while the real world is only its external appearance. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing other than the material after it has been transposed and translated inside the human head." Marx and Engels had declared that all ideas were human and that every idea was bound up with some specific social situation, which had been produced in the first instance, in turn, by man's relation to specific material conditions.

But what did this mean precisely? To many simple-minded persons who have just heard about Marxism, it means something extremely simple: it means that people always act from motives of economic interest and that everything mankind has thought or done is susceptible of being explained in those terms. It appears to such persons that they have discovered in Marxism a key to all the complexities of human affairs and that they are in a position—what is even more gratifying—to belittle the achievement of others by pointing out the money motivation behind it. If such people were pressed to justify their assumptions and if they were capable of philosophical argument, they could only fall back on some variety of "mechanism," which would represent the phenomena of consciousness, with its accompaniment of the illusion of will, as something in the nature of a phosphorescence generated by mechanistic activity, or perhaps run-

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ning parallel to it, but in either case incapable of affecting it. To lend itself to the misunderstanding of such people has been one of the main curses of Marxism ever since the days when Marx himself declared that as for him he was no Marxist and when Engels, in his letter to Joseph Bloch, said that "many of the recent 'Marxists'" were certainly turning out "a rare kind of balderdash."

Marx and Engels were not simple-minded; and they had rejected what they called the "pure mechanism" of the French eighteenth century philosophers. They saw, as Engels says, the impossibility of applying "the standards of mechanics to processes of a chemical and organic nature," in which, though the laws of mechanics had also a limited validity, they were certainly "pushed into the background by other and higher laws." And so in society, to quote another of Engels' letters, it was "not the case that the economic situation is the *sole active cause* and everything else only a passive effect."

What then? In what sense was it true that economics determined social relations and that ideas were derived from these? If the ideas were not "passive effects," what was the nature and extent of their activity? How could they act upon economic conditions? How could the theories of Marx and Engels themselves help to produce a proletarian revolution?

Well, the truth is that Marx and Engels never worked out their own point of view with any very great degree of exactitude. What is important and inspiring in it is the idea that the human spirit will be able to master its animal nature through reason; but they managed to make a great many people think they meant something the opposite of this: that mankind was hopelessly the victim of its appetites. For Marx had dropped philosophy proper with the fragments of the "Theses On Feuerbach"; he had intended to write a book on the Dialectic after he should have got done with "Capital," but he never lived to undertake it. Engels did attempt late in his life—first in "Anti-Dühring," which had the approval of Marx, and then in his short work on Feuerbach and his long letters to various correspondents, written after Marx's death—to explain the general point of view. But Engels, who had confessed in his youth, at the time when he was studying philosophy most earnestly, that he had little natural aptitude for the subject and who even in later years wrote to Marx of his "weakness *en fait de théorie,*" provided no more than a sketch for a system. And if you look up and piece together all that Marx and Engels wrote on the subject, you do not get a very satisfactory picture. Max Eastman, in his remarkable study "Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution," has shown the discrepancies between the statements

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that Marx and Engels made at various times; Sidney Hook, in his extremely able but less acutely critical book "Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx," has tried to iron out the inconsistencies, to state with precision what has been left in the vague, and to formulate a presentable system. The main point about the philosophy of Marxism for us here is that its emphasis is considerably shifted between the first phase of its creators and their latest. If we read "The German Ideology" of 1845-6—into which an element of satire enters—we find that we are having it drummed into us that all the things that men think and imagine grow straight out of their vulgarest needs; if we read Engels' letters of the nineties, written at a time when people interested in Marxism were beginning to ask fundamental questions, we get an old man's soberest effort to state his notion of the nature of things, and it produces an entirely different impression. "Marx and I," he wrote, "are partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasize its central character in opposition to our opponents who denied it, and there wasn't always time, place and occasion to do justice to the other factors in the reciprocal interactions of the historical process."

Let us see now how Engels envisaged these "reciprocal interactions."

The first image which comes to our mind when we hear about the Marxist view of history—an image for which, as Engels says, he and Marx themselves are partly responsible—is a tree of which the roots are the methods of production, the trunk is the social relations, and the branches, or "superstructure," are law, politics, philosophy, religion and art—whose true relation to the trunk and the roots is concealed by "ideological" leaves. But this is not what Marx and Engels meant. Their tree is more in the nature of that curious oriental one of which the branches droop down to the ground and take root there. The ideological activities of the superstructure are regarded by them neither merely as reflections of the economic base nor as simple ornamental fantasies which grow out of it. The conception is a great deal more complicated. Each of these higher departments of the superstructure—law, politics, philosophy, etc.—is always struggling to set itself free from its tether in economic interest and to evolve a professional group which shall be partly independent of class bias and the relation of whose work to the economic roots may be extremely indirect and obscure. These groups may act directly on one another and even back on the social-economic basis.

Engels, in one of these letters, tries to give some idea of what

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he means by examples from the department of law. The laws of inheritance, he says, have evidently an economic basis, because they must be supposed to correspond to various stages in the development of the family; but it would be very hard to prove that the freedom of testamentary disposition in England or the restricted right of disposition in France can wholly be traced to economic causes. Yet both of these kinds of law have their effect on the economic system in that they influence the distribution of wealth. (It should be noted, by the way, that in "The Housing Question" [Section 3, II], published in 1872, he gives a rather more "materialistic" account of the development of legal systems.) Marx had once—in a first draught for an "Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy"—made some attempt to explore the difficulties of the connection between art and economic conditions. The periods of the highest development of art do not coincide, he says, with the highest developments of society. Great art—the Greek epic, for example—is not even necessarily the product of a high period of artistic development. In any given instance, it is possible to see why a particular kind of art should have flourished at a particular moment: the very naiveté of the Greeks, who had not yet invented the printing press, their closeness to primitive mythology at an epoch before the prevalence of lightning rods, when it was still possible for people to imagine that a thunderbolt meant the anger of Zeus, their childlike charm in the childhood of society—this rendered their art "in certain respects the standard and model beyond attainment." The difficulty lay only in discovering the *general laws* of the connection between artistic and social development. One would say that Marx had found a great deal of difficulty in explaining the above specific case and that his explanation was far from satisfactory. The trouble is that he has not gone into the question of what is meant when the epoch of the lightning rod is called a period of "higher" social development than the epoch of the Homeric epic. That he was working toward an inquiry into this matter is indicated by another passage from the same document: "The unequal relation, for example, between material and artistic production. *In general, the conception of progress is not to be taken in the sense of the usual abstraction* [italics mine]. In the case of art, etc., it is not so important and difficult to understand this disproportion as in that of practical social relations: for example, the relation between education in the United States and in Europe. The really difficult point, however, which has to be gone into here is that of the unequal development of relations of production as legal relations. As, for example, the connection between Roman civil law (this is less true of criminal and public law) and modern production." But this manu-

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script is remarkable chiefly—like the scraps of the "Theses on Feuerbach"—for indicating that, though Marx was aware of the importance of certain problems, he never really got around to going into them. He dropped this discussion and never went on with it.

In regard to the role of science in their system, Marx and Engels became quite confused, because their own work is supposed to be scientific, and they must believe in its effect on society at the same time that they are obliged to acknowledge its kinship with the other ideologies of the superstructure. In Marx's preface (a different work from the fragment mentioned above) to his "Critique of Political Economy" he says that, in studying the transformations resulting from social revolutions, "the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical—in short, ideological forms, in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." Natural science then, is not to be numbered among the ideological outgrowths of the superstructure, but has a precision of which they are incapable; and this precision social science may share. Yet at the time when he and Engels had been discrediting the "abstract man" of Feuerbach, they pointed out in "The German Ideology" that "even the 'pure' natural sciences begin by deriving their aims as well as their materials from trade and industry, from the sensible activity of men"; and he was later to declare in "Capital" that "in the domain of political economy, free scientific research encounters not merely the same enemies which it encounters in the other domains," but others more formidable still, because "the very nature of the subject with which it is dealing brings into the field against it those passions which are at once the most violent, the basest and the most abominable of which the human breast is capable: the furies of personal interest." Engels in "Anti-Dühring" claims little for the precision of science. In those sciences, he says, such as mechanics and physics, which are more or less susceptible of mathematical treatment, one can speak of final and eternal truths, though even in mathematics itself there is plenty of room for uncertainty and error; in the sciences that deal with living organisms, the immutable truths consist solely of such platitudes as that all men are mortal and that all female mammals have lacteal glands; and in the sciences which he calls "historical," precision becomes still more difficult: "once we pass beyond the primitive stage of man, the so-called Stone Age, the repetition of conditions is the exception and not the rule, and when such repetitions occur, they never arise under exactly similar conditions," and when it does turn out, "by way of exception,"

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that we come to be able to recognize the inner connection between the social and political forms of an epoch, this only occurs, as a rule, when these forms are out of date and nearing extinction." And he adds that in the sciences that deal with the laws of human thought—logic and dialectics—the situation is not any better.

And yet Marx and Engels were never sceptical about their own theory of the social revolution; they never doubted that the purpose they derived from this theory would eventually be accomplished. Nor did they trouble themselves much to explain how their own brand of "ideology," avowedly itself a class ideology designed to promote the interests of the proletariat, could have some different kind of validity from that of others.

Where do these validities begin and end? the reader may ask today of Marx and Engels. How shall we determine to what extent a law or a work of art, for example, is the product of class delusion and to what extent it has some more general application? To what extent and under what conditions do the ideas of human beings react upon their economic bases? The last word that Engels leaves us on the subject (in his letter to Joseph Bloch, September 21, 1890) is his assertion that, though the economic factor is not "the *sole* determining factor," yet "the production and reproduction of real life constitutes in the *last instance* the determining factor in history" [italics in both cases Engels']. But what about the carry-over value of a system of law or a literary culture? Did the Roman jurists and Virgil really perish with the passing of Rome? What does "the last instance" mean? No doubt there would be no Aeneid without Augustus; but then it is equally true that there would be no Aeneid, as we know it, without Virgil's Alexandrian predecessor, Apollonius Rhodius; and to what degree does Virgil, in turn, enter as a principle of cultural life into the new forms of society which are to follow him? Is the "last instance" last in time or is it ultimate in the quite different sense of being the fundamental motive of human behavior? In neither case is the conception really clear. Marx, who had studied Roman law, was evidently about to address himself to this subject in the notes I have quoted above; but why did he never do so? Why, in a word, were he and Engels content to leave the problem of the relation of man's conscious creative will to the processes of inorganic nature and to the less enlightened activities of humanity at such meager generalizations as the statements that "men make their own history, but not just as they please. They do not choose the circumstances for themselves, but have to work upon circumstances as they find them, have to fashion the material handed down by the past"

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(Marx: "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," 1852); or that "men make their own history, but not until now with a collective will according to a collective plan" (Engels' letter to Hans Starkenburg, 1894)?

Engels' fullest attempt to state the point of view is in his essay, written in 1886, on "Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of German Classical Philosophy." "Men make their own history," he writes, "whatever its outcome may be, in that each person follows his own consciously desired end; and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history. Thus it is also a question of what the many individuals desire. The will is determined by passion or deliberation. But the levers which immediately determine passion or deliberation are of very different kinds. Partly they may be external objects, partly ideal motives, ambition, 'enthusiasm for truth and justice,' personal hatred or even purely individual whims of all sorts. But, on the one hand, we have seen that, for the most part, the many individual wills active in history produce quite different results from those they intended—results often, in fact, quite the opposite; so that in relation to the total result, their motives are also of only secondary significance. On the other hand, the further question arises: what driving forces, in turn, stand behind these motives? What are the historical causes which, in the brains of the actors, transform themselves into these motives? The old materialism never put itself this question."

Engels answers with "class struggle for economic emancipation." But *he* never puts himself the question of precisely how the "ideal motives" can in turn affect the progress of the class struggle.

The point is that Marx and Engels from the beginning had had something which had prevented them from putting these questions in the terms in which we have been discussing them above: they had the Hegelian Dialectic. From the moment that they had admitted the Dialectic into their semi-materialistic system, they had admitted an element of mysticism.

Marx and Engels had both begun as idealists. They imagined they had brought Hegel down to earth; and certainly nobody had ever labored more deliberately and energetically than they had to discredit men's futile illusions, to rub men's noses in their human miseries, to hold men's minds to their practical problems. And yet the very fact of their insistent effort—which an Englishman or a Frenchman would never have found necessary—betrays their contrary predisposition. They had actually carried along with them a

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good deal of the German idealism which they thought they were warring against. The young Marx who had lampooned the doctors for imagining the soul could be purged with a pill was still present in the dialectical materialist.

The abstractions of German philosophy, which may seem to us unmeaning or clumsy if we encounter them in English or French, convey in German, through their capitalized solidity, almost the impression of primitive gods. They are substantial, and yet they are a kind of pure beings; they are abstract, and yet they nourish. They have the power to hallow, to console, to intoxicate, to render warlike, as perhaps only the songs and the old epics of other peoples do. It is as if the old tribal deities of the North had first been converted to Christianity, while still maintaining their self-assertive pagan nature; and as if then, as the Christian theology became displaced by French eighteenth-century rationalism, they had put on the mask of pure reason. But for becoming less anthropomorphic, they were not the less mythopoeic creations. The Germans, who have done so little in the field of social observation, who have produced so few great social novels or dramas, have retained and developed to an amazing degree the genius for creating myths. The *Ewig-Weibliche* of Goethe, the *Kategorische Imperativ* of Kant, the *Weltgeist* with its *Idee* of Hegel—they dominated the minds of the Germans and haunted European thought in general like great hovering legendary divinities. Karl Marx, in the passage I have quoted above, described the Idea of Hegel as a "demiurge": this demiurge continued to walk by his side even after he imagined he had dismissed it. He still believed in the triad of Hegel: the *These,* the *Antithese* and the *Synthese;* and this triad was simply the old Trinity, taken over from the Christian theology, as the Christians had taken it over from Plato. It was the mythical and magical triangle which from the time of Pythagoras and before had stood as a symbol for certainty and power and which probably derived its significance from its reference to the male sexual organs. "Philosophy," Marx once wrote, "stands in the same relation to the study of the actual world as onanism to sexual love"; but into his study of the actual world he insisted on bringing the Dialectic. Certainly the one-in-three, three-in-one of the Thesis, the Antithesis and the Synthesis has had upon Marxists a compelling effect which it would be impossible to justify through reason. (It is almost a wonder that Richard Wagner never composed a music-drama on the Dialectic: indeed, there does seem to be something of the kind in the Nibelungen cycle in the relations between Wotan, Brunhilde and Siegfried.)

The Dialectic lies deep in all Marx's work; it remained with

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him all his life. It formed his technique of thought and with it his literary style. His method of stating ideas was a dialectical sequence of paradoxes, of concepts turning into their opposites; and it contains a large element of pure incantation. It is most obvious in his earlier writings, where it is sometimes extremely effective, sometimes artificial and tiresome: "Luther vanquished servility based upon devotion, because he replaced it by servility based upon conviction. He shattered faith in authority, because he restored the authority of faith. He transformed parsons into laymen, because he transformed laymen into parsons. He liberated men from outward religiosity, because he made religiosity an inward affair of the heart. He emancipated the body from chains, because he laid chains upon the heart." But it continued to figure in his writing up to the time when he brought "Capital" to its climax with his phrase about expropriating the expropriators.

In later life, he devoted much time to the study of higher mathematics, in which, as he told Lafargue, he "found the dialectical movement again in its most logical as well as its simplest form." And Engels worked at mathematics and physics, chemistry and zoölogy, in an effort to prove that the dialectical process governed the natural world. The Russians since the Revolution have carried on these researches and speculations; and with the spread of political Marxism, they have been cropping up in other countries. Recent examples are the distinguished British scientists, J. D. Bernal and J. B. S. Haldane, who have been trying to show the workings of the Dialectic in physics and chemistry and in biology, respectively. One's attitude toward this sort of thinking is naturally determined by one's appetite for pure metaphysics. To anyone who has always found it difficult to feel the inevitability of any metaphysical system and who tends to regard metaphysics in general as the poetry of imaginative people who think in abstractions instead of in images, the conceptions of the dialectical materialists recommend themselves only moderately. They do provide a dramatic formula for the dynamics of certain social changes; but they are obviously impossible to apply to others.

It has not been difficult for the critics of Engels—who took certain of his examples straight from Hegel's "Logic"—to show that he was straining a point when he asserted that the "negation of the negation" (that is, the action of the antithesis against the thesis) was demonstrated in mathematics by the fact that the negation of the negation of a was $+a^2$, "the original positive magnitude, but at a higher level." The negation of $-a$ is obviously not a^2, but a; and if you want to get a^2, you do not have to negate at all: you can

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simply multiply *a plus* by *a plus*. Engels did, to be sure, admit that one has so to construct the first negation that the second "remains or becomes possible." But since in that case the dialectical materialist has always to provide his own conditions in order to arrive at dialectical results, what becomes of his claim that the Dialectic is inherent in all the processes of nature? And so with the "transition of quantity into quality" (the final emergence of the synthesis): Professor Hook, in his paper on "Dialectic and Nature" in the second number of the *Marxist Quarterly,* has pointed out that, in the case of such an example of Engels' as the sudden transformation at certain temperatures of water into steam or ice, the transformation for a different observer would take place at a different moment and would be a different transformation: for a person from whose point of view the water was concealed in a radiator, the sudden transition of which he would be aware would be that, perhaps marked by a sneeze, of the dropping of the temperature of the room from a comfortable warmth to distinct chilliness. And who knows but that the application to water of a microscope which would disclose its component electrons would banish the illusion that, at the point of boiling, it begins to change from a liquid to a vapor?

And so with the examples given by Bernal and Haldane. After all, the various discoveries invoked by Bernal were arrived at quite without the intervention of dialectical thinking—just as Mendeleyev's Periodic Table, which so much impressed Engels as an instance of quality determined by quantity, owed nothing to the antithesis and the synthesis; and it is difficult to see how they are improved by being fitted into the Dialectic. In the case of one of them, the Relativity Theory of Einstein, the discoverer has himself gone on record as of the opinion that the writings of Engels did not have "any special interest either from the point of view of present-day physics or from that of the history of physics." In the case of another of Bernal's examples, the Freudian theory of repressed desires, the dialectical cycle is certainly far from inevitable. The instinct is the thesis; the repression is the antithesis; the sublimation is the synthesis: good! But suppose the patient goes insane instead of being able to sublimate; suppose he kills himself: where is the reconciliation of opposites in the synthesis? Where is the progression from the lower to the higher? Certainly it is true in various fields that changes occur through accumulation which look to us like changes in kind. It may be true, as J. B. S. Haldane says, that the transformation of ice into water is still a mysterious phenomenon. But in what way does this prove the dialectical Trinity? In what way is that Trinity proved when Professor Haldane maps out the processes of mutation and

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selection as triads any more than it was proved by Hegel when he arranged all his arguments in three parts—or, for that matter, for Vico, when he persisted in seeing everything in threes: three kinds of languages, three systems of law, three kinds of government, etc., or by Dante, when he divided his poem into three sections with thirty-three cantos each?

In an interesting recent controversy in the Marxist quarterly, *Science and Society,* Professor A. P. Lerner of the London School of Economics has brought against Professor Haldane what would seem to be the all too obvious charge that he is trying to pin the Dialectic on biology, which has hitherto derived nothing from it, from no motives possessing scientific validity but out of simple Marxist piety. Professor Haldane replies, however, that since he was "compelled" by one of the State publishing houses in Moscow to formulate the Mendelian theory of evolution in terms of the Dialectic, he has found the dialectical way of thinking a great help to him in his laboratory work. He does not go so far as to claim, he admits, that the result of his researches "could not have been attained without a study of Engels"; he merely states "that they were not reached without such a study." So far from "suffering," as Professor Lerner has suggested, "from an overpowering emotional urge to embrace the Dialectic," Professor Haldane, who has been active in the defense of Madrid and who takes care to let the reader know it in the course of his first paper, explains that the process of embracing the Dialectic has taken him "some six years, so it was hardly love at first sight." "And I hope," he goes on, "that no student of biology will become a user of the Dialectic unless he or she is persuaded that it is (as I believe and Dr. Lerner does not) an aid both to the understanding of known biological facts and to the discovery of new ones." He "must thank" Professor Lerner "for his stimulating criticism . . . But the most valuable criticism would be from workers who were engaged in the same branch of science as myself and had accepted Marxist principles."

"I hope no....will become a....until he or she is persuaded . . . as I believe and Dr. Lerner does not . . . But the most valuable criticism would be from workers who . . . had accepted the....principles." Where have we heard these accents before? Was it not from the lips of the convert to Buchmanism or Roman Catholicism?

The Dialectic then is a religious myth, disencumbered of divine personality and tied up with the history of mankind. "I hate all the gods," Marx had said in his youth; but he had also projected himself into the character of the resolute seaman who carried the

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authority of all the gods in his breast, and in one of his early *Rheinische Zeitung* articles on the freedom of the press, in asserting that writing is an end in itself to which the writer must sacrifice himself and which must not be considered as a means of earning a living, he declares that the writer must "in his way adopt the principles of the preacher of religion, 'Obey God rather than man,' among those men in whose society he is confined with his human needs and desires." And as for Engels, his boyhood had been passed under the pulpit of the great Calvinist evangelist Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher, who preached in Elberfeld and reduced his congregation to weeping and stupefaction. Engels tells in one of his "Letters from the Wupperthal" how Krummacher would subdue his auditors by the logic of his terrible argument. Given the preacher's primary assumption—the total "incapacity of man by dint of his own effort to will the good, let alone to accomplish it"—it followed that God must give men this capability; and since the will of God himself was free, the allotment of this capability must be arbitrary; it followed that "the few that were chosen would *nolentes volentes* be blessed, while the others would be damned forever. 'Forever?' Krummacher would query; and answer, 'Yes, forever!' " This seems to have made an immense impression on the young Engels.

Karl Marx had identified his own will with the antithesis of the dialectical process. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world," he had written in his "Theses on Feuerbach." "Our business is to change it." The will had always tended in German philosophy to play the role of a superhuman force; and this will had been salvaged by Marx and incorporated in Dialectical Materialism. It was the "dynamic principle" of which he spoke, and it gave to Marx's revolutionary ideas a peculiar endurance and drive. For a really active and purposeful man like Lenin it may be an added source of strength to have the conviction that history is with him, that he is certain of achieving his goal. The Dialectic so simplifies the whole picture: it seems to concentrate the complexities of society into an obvious protagonist and antagonist; it gives the confidence not only that the upshot of the struggle will certainly be successful, but that it will resolve all such struggles forever. The triad of the Dialectic has thus had its real validity as a symbol for the recurring insurgence of the young and growing forces of life against the old and the sterile, for the coöperative instincts of society against the barbarous and the anarchic. It is an improvement over the earlier point of view it superseded: "Down with the tyrant! Let us have freedom!"—in that it conceives revolutionary progress as an organic development out of the past for which the reactionary forces have themselves in their

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way been preparing and which combines the different resources of both sides instead of merely substituting one thing for another.

But conversion to the belief in a divine power does not have always an energizing effect. It was in vain that Marx tried to bar out Providence: "History does nothing," he insisted; "it 'possesses no colossal riches'; it 'fights no fight.' It is rather man—real, living man—who acts, possesses and fights in everything. It is by no means 'History' which uses man as a means to carry out its ends as if it were a person apart; rather History is nothing but the activity of man in pursuit of his ends." But as long as he keeps talking as if the proletariat were the chosen instrument of a Dialectic, as if its victory were predetermined, he does assume an extra-human power. History may be merely the affairs of men; but simply by using this abstract collective word and by using it so very often, by always talking of human doings in terms of a capitalized *"Geschichte,"* Marx has made it extremely easy to imagine that there is an entity called History which is doing things and which will make the human story come out right, no matter what you do or what your opponent does.

Certainly Marx tries to convince us that every man is an agent in the historical progress, certainly he preaches action; but, as the history of Christianity shows, the doctrine of salvation by works passes all too readily and rapidly into the doctrine of salvation by grace. All too naturally, by identifying himself with the antithesis of the Dialectic, that is, by professing a religious faith, the Marxist puts himself into the state of mind of a man going upstairs on an escalator. The Marxist Will which once resolved to change the world has been transformed into the invisible power which provides the motive force that runs the escalator; and if you simply take your stand on the bottom step, the escalator will get you to the top, that is, to the blessed condition of the synthesis. The only other situation conceivable is that of a man who tries to walk down the same escalator and who either is able to make no progress or goes backwards. Though there is in Marxism a strong element of morality which makes the escalator too mechanical a simile—since the man who is on the way up knows with certainty that he is a noble fellow, though he may not exert himself to move a step, while the man who has had the misfortune to move against the upcoming stairway, though he may be full of the most admirable intentions, is doomed, like the damned of Pastor Krummacher, not merely to be carried rear-end foremost toward the synthesis, but into inevitable ignominy and torment. So the German Social-Democrats of the Second International, assuming that the advent of socialism was sure, were found supporting an imperialist war which was to deprive the working class

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of all its liberties; so the Communists of the Third International, leaving history to the dialectical demiurge, have acquiesced in the despotism of Stalin while he was uprooting Russian Marxism itself and have been made the dupes of Soviet foreign policy to a point where they have found it quite natural to be assuring American labor that it could not afford to disregard a threat to American business interests in China.

Karl Marx, with his rigorous morality and his international point of view, had tried to harness the primitive German Will to a movement which should lead all humanity to prosperity, happiness and freedom. But in so far as this movement involves under the disguise of the Dialectic a semi-divine principle of History to which it is possible to shift the human responsibility for thinking, for deciding, for acting—and we are living at the present time in a period of the decadence of Marxism—it lends itself to the repressions of the tyrant. The parent stream of the old German Will which stayed at home and remained patriotic became canalized as the philosophy of German imperialism and ultimately of the Nazi movement. Both the Russian and the German branches threw out all that had been good in Christianity along with all that had been bad. The demiurge of German idealism was never a God of love, nor did it recognize human imperfection: it did not recommend humility for oneself or charity toward one's fellows. Karl Marx, with his Old Testament sternness, did nothing to humanize its workings. He desired that humanity should be united and happy; but he put that off till the achievement of the synthesis, and for the present he did not believe in human brotherhood. He was closer than he could ever have imagined to that imperialistic Germany he detested. After all, the German Nazis, also—also, the agents of an historical mission—believe that humanity will be happy and united when it is all Aryan and all pro-Hitler.

What Marx and Engels were getting at, however, was something which, though it may sometimes be played off the stage by the myth of the Dialectic and though an insistence on the problems it raises may seem to reduce it to disintegration, came nevertheless in its day as a point of view of revolutionary importance and which may still be accepted as partly valid in our own. Let us dissociate it from the Dialectic and try to state it in the most general form:

"The inhabitants of civilized countries, insofar as they have been able to function as creative and rational beings, have been striving after disciplines and designs which would bring order, beauty and health into their lives; but so long as they continue to be divided

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into groups which have an interest in injuring one another, they will still be hampered by inescapable limitations. Only from that moment when they have become conscious of these conflicts and have set their hands to the task of getting rid of them will they find themselves on the road to arriving at a really human code of ethics or political system or school of art as distinguished from those lame and cramped ones we know. But the current of human endeavor is always running in this direction. Each of the great political movements that surges up across social barriers brings about a new and broader merging of the rising aggressive element with the element it assaults and absorbs. The human spirit is always expanding against predatory animal pressure, to make larger and larger units of human beings, until we shall finally have realized once for all that the human race itself is one and that it must not injure itself. Then it will base on this realization a morality, a society and an art more profound and more comprehensive than man is at present able even to imagine.

"And though it is true that we can no longer depend on God to give us laws that transcend human limitations, though it is true that we cannot even pretend that any of the intellectual constructions of man has any reality independent of the special set of earthly conditions which has stimulated certain men to build it, yet we may claim for our new science of social change, rudimentary though this still is, that it may more truly be described as universal and objective than any previous theory of history. For Marxist science has been developed in reaction to a situation in which it has finally become apparent that if society is to survive at all, it must be reorganized on new principles of equality; so that *we* have been forced to make a criticism of history from the point of view of the imminent necessity of a world set free from nationalisms and classes. If we have committed ourselves to fight for the interests of the proletariat, it is because we are really trying to work for the interests of humanity as a whole. In this future the human spirit as represented by the proletariat will expand to make the larger unity of which its mind is already compassing the vision."

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The Devil Theory of the Dialectic

(A Reply to Edmund Wilson)

William Phillips

As against those who would mummify Marxism into a system of eternal truths, one can only welcome the irreverent and civilized approach of Edmund Wilson. Even if one disagrees, as I do, with Mr. Wilson's conclusions, the necessity of reexamining the ideas of Marx in the light of modern science and philosophy cannot be denied. The failure of most orthodox materialists to do so lends color to the popular conception that Marxism is a variety of religious experience.

Mr. Wilson, however, is not concerned with bringing Marxism up to date; on the contrary, he has set out to prove that Marxism is alien to modern thought and he all but urges that it be deported back to its home in the nineteenth century. Arguing that Marxism has its roots in the dialectic, and that the dialectic, itself, is a variety of unscientific hocus-pocus, Mr. Wilson dismisses the Marxist philosophy as an old-fashioned mixture of German mythology and mysticism. Put Wotan, Machievelli and Moses together, and you come close to the portrait Mr. Wilson draws of the mind of Marx.

Strangely enough, however, Mr. Wilson is evidently impressed with the vista of socialism which Marx held out, and he closes his essay with a very sympathetic summary of the humanist aims underlying Marx's philosophy. But, since Marx's writing is an exposition of the necessity as well as the possibility of building a truly human society, Wilson is placed in the dilemma of accepting the *end* of Marxism while rejecting its *means*. Thus Mr. Wilson reduces Marxism to a colossal poem about history: visionary, aggressive, shocking, irresponsible—and utterly Utopian.

Mr. Wilson disposes of the actual body of Marxism, by assuming what he has to prove. For his argument that the discovery of a flaw (the Dialectic) brings the rest of the Marxist philosophy toppling to the ground, rests on the assumption that Marxism is a monolithic structure, built for once and all, which must be accepted or rejected in its entirety. Yet it is this very question of the nature and purpose of Marxism, that is the central issue in Mr. Wilson's discussion of the subject. Is Marxism a static philosophy, like that of any other systematic thinker in the past, parts of which may still be valid to-day, but

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fated as a whole to be outdated by cultural change and discovery? Or, on the basis of what remains permanently valid in it, can Marxism be constantly recreated to serve the theoretical and political needs of the present? Failing to recognize this problem, Mr. Wilson is neither able to refute Marxism, nor to explain its persistence. And not only does he ignore the empirical work of Marx in politics and economics, but he sets up his own mythology in order to explain the "mysticism" of Marx and Engels.

Before going into Mr. Wilson's theoretical difficulties, however, let us first consider his specific charges against Marxism.

1) Until some defense more convincing than any I am aware of is made of the laws of the Dialectic, I believe Mr. Wilson is quite justified in his criticism of the magical properties that have been attributed to it. Nor can we place any stock in the pathetic efforts of otherwise reputable scientists to relate their dialectical urges to their laboratory findings. Certainly, it is difficult to see how any rational person who has read Sidney Hook's writings on the subject can still cling to an idea that has no determinable meaning today and whose value for science is admittedly revelatory rather than methodological.

But what has been important in Marxism is not its philosophy of science but its philosophy of history, and here the Dialectic has played a somewhat different role. When Marx claimed that all social change since primitive society followed the pattern of the Dialectic, he meant to describe the process of development from the slave system of Greece and Rome, through feudalism, into capitalism, and, finally, socialism. In each case, Marx pointed out, the economic contradictions which fettered production were resolved by the coming to power of a new class, introducing new and radically different social relations. The force for transformation in society, unlike nature, was supplied by man's *consciousness* of his class needs. Ignoring this distinction as well as the wealth of empirical evidence which Marx cited to prove his theory, Wilson simply attaches all the odium of the *Naturdialectic* to Marx's laws of history. Yet the actual conclusions of Marx and Engels about the direction of history were not deduced from the Dialectic, but were arrived at inductively through a study of political and economic facts. Surely, Mr. Wilson cannot hope to bury all this scientific work in the grave of the Dialectic.

2) Mr. Wilson's charge that Marx was a metaphysician of destiny, preaching a doctrine of patience, until history and its two assistants, Dialectic and Will, brought socialism to the world, ignores the fact that Marx was primarily a revolutionist, theoretically and organizationally. Marx's confidence in the working class as a revolutionary

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force was based on a painstaking analysis of the economic development of capitalism. The restriction of the forces of production, with concentration of wealth on one side and ever increasing exploitation and poverty on the other—these are the material conditions which make society ready for socialism. All that is lacking is the consciousness of its interests on the part of the working class, and it is to the development of this consciousness that Marx and his disciples devoted themselves.

That such will be the outcome of history cannot, of course, be metaphysically guaranteed. All that can be said—and all that Marx did say—is that the alternative to socialism is barbarism or chaos; nor has the evidence of history from the upheavals of 1848 to the October Revolution and the Spanish civil war so far provided any refutation of Marx's political theories. It is true that Marx frequently spoke of History as though it were an autonomous force which could be depended on to carry us into socialism and that he sometimes referred to the "inevitability of socialism." But it is obvious, even textually, that by History Marx meant nothing more mysterious than the total sequence of events, including the revolutionary activity of the proletariat, which makes up the content of social life. And the "inevitability of socialism" must be taken as a short-hand way of saying that if Marx's analysis of capitalism is correct, then socialism necessarily becomes the next stage in history. It is also true that Marx sometimes made possibilities appear as certainties, but this he did for agitational purposes, when the immediate tasks of persuasion and bolstering of morale obviously called for rhetorical appeals.

3) It is difficult to follow Mr. Wilson's argument against the well-known Marxian principle that the economic factor is in the last instance the determining factor of history. At one point Mr. Wilson seems to be saying that Marx and Engels failed to write a history of civilization, illustrating and working out all the implications of this idea—a legitimate disappointment, to be sure, but hardly a refutation. Again, Mr. Wilson cites Engels' confession that both he and Marx overemphasized the economic factor in their early writing, but he fails to quote the very next sentence of this letter: "But when it was a case of presenting a section of history, that is, of a practictl application, the thing was different, and there no error was possible."

Mr. Wilson also objects that the theory is formulated in ambiguous terms. "Is the last instance," he asks, "last in time or is it ultimate in the quite different sense of being the fundamental motive of human behavior? In neither case is the conception really clear." Quite naturally, we might add, for neither interpretation which Mr. Wilson offers is what Marx and Engels intended their theory to mean. Since, there-

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fore, the question Mr. Wilson raises is more of a textual than a theoretical one, we might quote from the explanations which the founding fathers themselves gave of historical materialism:

"When, therefore, it is a question of investigating the driving forces, which—consciously or unconsciously, and indeed very often unconsciously—lie behind the motives of men in their historical actions and which constitute the real ultimate driving forces of history, then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people. . . But how did these classes come into existence? . . . In the struggle between landed property and the bourgeoisie, no less than in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it was a question in the first instance of economic interests, to the furtherance of which political power was intended to serve merely as a means. . . . We discover that in modern history the will of the state is, on the whole determined by the changing needs of civil society, by the supremacy of this or that class, in the last resort, by the development of the productive forces and relations of exchange. . . .*

"As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air—religion, philosophy, etc., . . . the people who deal with this belong to special spheres in the division of labor and appear to themselves to be working in an independent field. . . . But all the same they themselves remain under the dominating influence of economic development. In philosophy, for instance, this can be most readily proved in the bourgeois period. Hobbes was the first modern materialist (in the eighteenth century sense) but he was an absolutist in a period when absolute monarchy was at its height throughout the whole of Europe. . . . Locke, both in religion and politics, was the child of the class compromise of 1688. The English deists and their most consistent successors, the French materialists, were the true philosophers of the bourgeoisie, the French even of the bourgeois revolution. The German petty bourgeois runs through German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. . . . I consider the ultimate supremacy of economic development established in these spheres too, but it comes to pass within conditions imposed by the particular sphere itself: in philosophy, for instance, through the operation of economic influences (which again generally act under political, etc., disguises) upon the existing philosophic material handed down by predecessors. Here economy creates nothing absolutely new, but it determines the way in which the existing material of thought is altered and further developed, and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal, and moral reflexes which exercise the greatest direct influence upon philosophy. . . ."**

* *Ludwig Feuerbach by F. Engels.*
** *The Correspondence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*: Letter 214 (Engels to Conrad Schmidt).

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4) Mr. Wilson finds a philosophic contradiction in the idea of truth emerging from a class ideology. How, he asks, can Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat, have any greater validity than the philosophy of any other class?

To some extent the difficulty lies in the fact that Marxism is not an ideology in the sense in which Mr. Wilson uses the word. The ideology of the bourgeoisie, for example, is a rationalization of its predicament; whereas Marxism is a method for placing at the disposal of the proletariat the full heritage of human knowledge. As Marx pointed out, the ruling class consistently seeks to hamper any scientific research which might undermine the theoretical justifications of its power. On the other hand, it is to the interests of the working class to expose systematically and ruthlessly all the pious ignorance, all the carefully devised mysteries, of traditional thought. In this sense, Marxism regards itself as a criticism of all ideology which conceals the nature of things and events.

Thus it is *possible* for the theories of Marx to have objective truth; whether they actually do cannot be determined abstractly, but only by a concrete examination of historical data.

Since Mr. Wilson criticises Marx for reducing history to the staging of a metaphysical system, it is most ironic that Mr. Wilson himself should explain history in terms of certain myths and essences. He conceives of German philosophy, for example, as but the old Gothic spirit in more modern dress. Strip Hegel of his abstract jargon, and you can see the pagan gods of war, love, and fertility! And if one never asks why certain ideas flourished in one period rather than another, he can discover the ghosts of primitive tribes lecturing in the universities of the German Reich: behind Nietzsche lurks Siegfried, Feuerbachs' materialism might be a pagan heresy, and Marx the leader of the ancient migrations.

Similarly, Mr. Wilson traces the barbarism of the Nazi movement as well as the betrayals of Stalin to the "primitive German Will which Marx tried to harness to a movement which should lead all humanity to prosperity, happiness, and freedom." Both the Nazis and the Stalinists, according to Mr. Wilson, inherited the militant messianic spirit and the blood-and-iron ethics of the German Will (not to mention Pastor Krummacher). Both are presumably dedicated to an ideal of universal brotherhood, but both postpone it indefinitely while rejecting for the present the Christian doctrine of love and charity.

And so annoyed is Mr. Wilson with the Dialectic, which he regards as an offspring of the German Will, that he elaborates it into a devil theory of history. If Social-Democrats supported the policies of

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the bourgeoisie in 1914, it was because that they were drugged by the opium of the Dialectic, which assured them that socialism would come of its own accord. Similarly, Mr. Wilson ascribes the waning militancy of the Third International to its faith in the Dialectic. All this sounds like a doctrine of original sin; yet Mr. Wilson would give no quarter to the alleged idealism of Marx. Certainly Mr. Wilson endows the Dialectic with far greater historical power than its most orthodox advocates do.

Mr. Wilson's difficulties, I believe, arise from his unhistorical approach to a theory of history that was created in a specific epoch and later adapted by organizations and individuals to their own political and cultural needs. Hence Mr. Wilson draws no distinction between its original meaning and its subsequent distortions. For example, it has been frequently pointed out that the theoreticians of the Second International perverted Marxism into an anemic and respectable method of bargaining with the bourgeoisie. They would not themselves undertake the responsibilities of a social revolution, and so they preached the benevolence of history as proof that socialism was inevitable. Nor is Mr. Wilson justified in laying the sins of Stalin at the bier of Marx, for Stalinism must be divided into two phases neither of which Marx was responsible for. At first the Third International created a leftist caricature of Marxism in its attempt to prove its own orthodoxy as against the ostensible heresies of its opponents; while more recently Stalinists have concerned themselves very little about either the spirit or the letter of Marx's writing. Even the Dialectic is sponsored today, for the most part, not by official spokesmen but by those academic supporters of the Communist Party, who, having learned one trade, are now too old to learn another.

Similarly, we cannot hope to understand Marx's philosophy without investigating how he used the available intellectual tools of his time for his revolutionary purposes. Obviously this would take an extended study, but the relation can be seen in two of the very questions we have been discussing: the Dialectic and the 'inevitability' of socialism.

Marx, above all, was concerned with the principle of *change* in history as opposed to those traditional theories which, erected on the apparent realities of the moment, were largely indifferent to the process which constantly dissolved the present into the past. In this respect, Hegel, despite his inability to see beyond the Prussian state and his belief in spirit as the prime mover of history, was one of the most radical of Marx's forerunners, for Hegel recognized the organic trans-

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formations that move society from one stage to the next. It was only natural, therefore, that Marx should have taken over Hegel's Dialectic, stripped of its spiritual trappings, as the principle of social change through contradiction. And though we may find it necessary to discard the Dialectic today, we should note that Marx never thought of it as either the *proof* or the *means* of attaining socialism. At most it was a metaphor which related Marx's pragmatic studies of history to the most advanced philosophy of his time.

So, too, with the Dialectic in science. During Marx's lifetime, the older conceptions of science, based on the solidity of matter and on a mechanistic causality, were giving way to theories of organic change, through such discoveries as the cell in biology, the transformation of energy in physics and chemistry, and the theory of evolution. To Marx and Engels the Dialectic seemed to be the philosophic equivalent of these new developments in science, which emphasized change, reciprocity of action, and interpenetration. Today so many of these ideas have become laboratory axioms, and so many new problems have been raised by science, that we tend to forget it is not Marx who lagged behind the advance of science, but rather his professed disciples who today recite his formulas.

So, too, in presenting socialism as an empirical certainty, Marx did not violate any of the canons of nineteenth century thought. Science itself accepted the postulate of inevitability. It was considered absolutely certain, for example, that, barring changes in the nature of the world, hydrogen and oxygen combined would *always* produce water and that the sun could be depended on to rise in the east *every* morning. Modern science, however, no longer accepts this version. It bases itself rather on the idea of probability, so that we now speak of the high probability, amounting in practice to certainty, of the sun's rising. And as James Burnham has pointed out in a polemic against Max Eastman, one could easily substitute the idea of probability for that of inevitability with regard to socialism. Hence one would not endanger his scientific reputation, if he stated that Marx's analysis of capitalism leads to the conclusion that the achieving of socialism is highly probable, sufficiently high, in fact, to spur practical action to that end. Would not Mr. Wilson, who objects to any metaphysical assurances, accept such a translation into current scientific usage?

What is really at issue in Mr. Wilson's discussion is the role of Marxism today. How much of it is still valid? Is it a philosophic system in the traditional sense? Is it relevant to our scientific and cultural activities?

At one point, Mr. Wilson says Marxism "may be accepted as partly valid in our own time." (As to how valid, he does not say). But

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in Mr. Wilson's view Marxism is so laden with mysticism and so much of a piece, that it is difficult to see how he can with consistency preserve any part of it. In this respect, Mr. Wilson's attitude is but orthodoxy in reverse: both regard every bit of Marxism as essential to its being. The orthodox dialecticians would keep Marxism alive by reducing it to a corpse; Mr. Wilson has it stillborn.

These dilemmas can be avoided only by seeing Marxism as a philosophy of social action. So did Marx and Engels regard their theories; so did their disciples: the early Kautsky, the early Plechanov, Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky. Their politics is the state-craft of the proletariat; and it was in the interests of the proletariat that they laid bare the basis of class rule and the various ideologies which serve either actively or passively to prolong it. All varieties of mysticism and obscurantism, they discovered, had only the effect of retarding that consciousness which would liberate man from his slavery to things. Hence they pitted science against the fables of the spiritual: they sought to apply science to economics, history, and philosophy. And just as science verifies itself by its understanding and control of natural forces, so Marxists looked for the meaning or truth of some theory in its practical consequences. They believed that to act on the theory of Marxism, is, in the final instance, to refute opposing theories by *realizing* your own in history. "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking," wrote Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach,* "is not a question of theory but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question. . . . Social life is essential *practical.* All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."

Marxism, therefore, constantly intervenes in the cultural as well as the political life of society. While its method remains constant—radical, empirical, materialist—it is necessary, as it absorbs new discoveries and opposes new dogmas, for it to discard some of its original philosophic emphasis. So far there has been little reason to question the economics and politics of Marxism—nor, for that matter, its materialist account of history—but even here the appearance of both fascism and Stalinism call for further extension of the basic concepts. Similarly, in the domain of culture, it is not so much a question of repairing Marxism, as of carrying into our own time the type of criticism which Marx made in his. Thus Marxism would accept whatever is scientific in modern thought, branding the rest as disguised theology. In this sense, the text of Marxism is not absolutely fixed, but must be con-

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stantly recreated to keep step with the ever-changing world of politics and culture. And at any given time, the question of what is living and what is dead in Marxism is not an abstract one, for it can be determined only by applying the old theories to new ideas and situations.

Considered in all its aspects, Marxism is a way of life: a way of acting, thinking, and feeling. For in addition to being a theory of class action, it also reflects the moral needs of the proletariat. The writing of leading Marxists constantly stresses those qualities of solidarity, militancy, and intransigence which are to be found in the most conscious section of the working class, as against the smugness and corruption which is bred by the other classes of society. And Marx, himself, after stating that his theory declares man to be the supreme program of mankind, never tired of pointing out the growing self-alienation, in capitalist society, which smothers man's creative impulses.

Unlike any other philosophy, therefore, the prestige of Marxism depends to a great extent on the relative strength of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The value of Kant's system, for example, is hardly a live issue outside of the classroom; whereas Marxism is debated in the streets, gaining new supporters when the working class is flushed with victories, and losing them after defeats. In times of reaction, like the present, with the working class everywhere in retreat, labor organizations sprout revisions of Marxism, while an increasing number of intellectuals hasten to refute its basic ideas, and to assert once more their freedom from all "dogmas."

Yet what do they offer in its place? Have they some other method of bringing socialism? Or, at the very least, some better way of explaining political events? Surely, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that even the recent defeats of the working class, consummated in the Munich conference, can be understood only through a Marxist analysis of class relations. Have they refuted such an analysis? On the contrary, they have sunk back into a near-sighted empiricism, forswearing the radical implications of Marxism, yet apparently indifferent to the conservative implications of their own position. "Experience," Santayana once wrote, "seems to most of us to lead to conclusions, but empiricism has sworn never to draw them."

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A Little Anthology of British Poets

Edited by D. S. Savage

Poem

It is the sinners' dust-tongued bell claps me to churches
When, with his torch and hourglass, like a sulphur priest,
His beast heel cleft in a sandal,
Time marks a black aisle kindle from the brand of ashes,
Grief with dishevelled hands tear out the altar ghost
And a firewind kill the candle.

Over the choir minute I hear the hour chant:
Time's coral saint and the salt grief drown a foul sepulchre
And a whirlpool drives the prayerwheel;
Moonfall and sailing emperor, pale as their tideprint,
Hear by death's accident the clocked and dashed-down spire
Strike the sea hour through bellmetal.

There is loud and dark directly under the dumb flame,
Storm, snow and fountain in the weather of fireworks,
Cathedral calm in the pulled house;
Grief with drenched book and candle christens the cherub time
From the emerald, still bell; and from the pacing weathercock
The voice of bird on coral prays.

Forever it is a white child in the dark-skinned summer
Out of the font of bone and plants at that stone tocsin
Scales the blue wall of spirits;
From blank and leaking winter sails the child in colour,
Shakes, in crabbed burial shawl, by sorcerer's insect woken,
Ding dong from the mute turrets.

I mean by time the cast and curfew rascal of our marriage,
At nightbreak born in the fat side, from an animal bed
In a holy room in a wave;
And all love's sinners in sweet cloth kneel to a hyleg image,
Nutmeg, civet, and sea-parsley serve the clapped groom and bride
Who have brought forth the urchin grief.

DYLAN THOMAS

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Poem

The aborigines wore masks of old men's heads,
Stuck noses, skins of plasticine and circling beards.
These dream disguises hid the original face,
Were monstrous, topped a pygmy nakedness.

Their conquerors' mime was more direct; the hairless voice
Of commerce spoke as loud as pistols, trading vice,
Left lungs to explode, freak births, a bloody moon
Destroyed the indifference of man to man.

This was the crisis of living, not another such
Figured the long, collective memory of the race.
Tradition would not serve, a wilder dance
Began to tap and gesture in their brains.

The pole of stamping braves in one night threw the charges
Across their changing destiny's uncultured ages,
Beyond the invaders: under the antique features
Each eye was infinite mirror of their futures.

R. B. FULLER

Black Trust

Rhondda belches across mind,
Stone play, out of smoke, set,
Fibre of industrial mess.

Moratorium raises signal hand,
—Coal, product, ships, met.
Leaves canker of hate in mass.
Tynesider Clydesider
Cagewheel, crane on slipway,
Mind is torn, as others
Soot settles
in distance.

KEIDRYCH RHYS

Lament & Triumph

When the women who mourn in my head with tears
That tip my lids like mistletoe, are Joy's birds
Nuzzling in the feathery nests of my ears,
Or when the heart's beat has its line of words,

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And when the clockwork world of alarms is done,
I shall come out and lie naked and sweet in the sun.

Gazing at those fantastic Harlequin flies
Swivelling and shimmering on rubbish heaps in August
I think I live like them, and when one dies
I feel its tremor in my own bones' dust.
But then the luminous comets of the night
The glow-worm and the glitter-fly make me bright.

Here as I stand in the garbage of a world,
The broken pillars and arches on my shoulder,
Chaos of spiritual collapse wrecked and whirled
Like rags and leaves around me, I shudder.
Standing I see the million major men
Lying or flying from the end of man.

I go among the many broken and fallen,
Lying in angular attitudes of agony,
Cleansing their cracks with words of anger,
Laving their hurt with my heart's pollen:
It is a dream—I am myself those ones
On whom the world has fallen its tons.

Then a gentle ghost swings up to me,
Admonishing like a windy waving tree:
Fellow, it said, follow what I now speak,
There is one one to help restore the wreck:
I'm Einstein and Aeschylus and I'm Truth—
Keep me in mind, and suffer ruth for me.

GEORGE BARKER

Kyrie

Is man's old lust to war insatiable? There is
Grief in the blow that shatters the innocent face.
Pain blots out clearer sense. And pleasure suffers
The trial thrust of death in even the bride's embrace.

The black catastrophe that may lay waste our worlds
May be unconsciously desired. Fear masks our face:
And tears as warm and cruelly wrung as blood
Are falling even in the mouth of our grimace.

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How can our hope ring true? Fatality of guilt
And complicated anguish confounds time and place:
While from the tottering ancestral house an angry voice
Resounds in prophecy. Grant us extraordinary grace,

O spirit hidden in the dark in us and deep,
And bring to light the dream out of our sleep.

DAVID GASCOYNE

Poem

Night is as fatal as home. There are
In night's retractive fingers or
Water lapping the sky signs enough
To make one push a hand through roof,
Feeling life outside as real as hair.

From touch of fingers or of hair
The intrepid would not hesitate to answer: "Here
The virgin and reflecting water
More amiable than you and it may be wittier
Discloses life on other shore."

Though never attainable that other shore,
Attempted by few who face the sheer
Mud face knowing they rise to death
And scream as they hear water beneath
Their slipping feet, no time for a wire

To X for help. Behind barbed wire
Benevolent aunts sit dreaming of war,
More difficult and dangerous grow
Lovers' or friends' clasp, many grieve
For what they imagine that once they were;

And at any time now the detached whirr
Of shocked machinery may shock the wooer,
The skylights go out, the dumb water
No longer obsequious as a waiter
Get up and speak: "Everything is over".

Regard then now the long days over
The dark and still attractive river;
Remembering a summer idyll
It is difficult to believe life is not well
As fingers cleverly pass through hair.

JULIAN SYMONS

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A Further Note On Myth

William Troy

In the last issue of Partisan Review James Burnham lists what he believes to be no fewer than three "false and dangerous" contentions in an essay on Thomas Mann that I recently contributed to these pages. Nobody likes to be accused of "false and dangerous" ideas, and this in itself would be a sufficient reason for making a reply. But I sincerely believe that the confusion that Mr. Burnham reveals in his communication raises several problems of enough importance and enough general interest to justify a rather close examination. If this note departs from that etiquette which demands that no answer should exceed in length the occasion that provoked it, it is with this apology.

(I) *Myth and Method.* Quite rightly, in my opinion, Mr. Burnham begins with an attempt to define the critical method that I adopted in this particular essay. But to understand his objections it will be necessary to look at some of his own assumptions concerning the nature of literature stated elsewhere in his communication. "What we call works of literature," Mr. Burnham explains, "are material objects, produced by the conscious will of men, enjoyed in various ways by other men, their conditions of production and enjoyment limited by social and historical circumstances as well as by the psychological traits of authors and readers. Thus, as the context changes, works of literature figure variously, as psychological, anthropological, sociological, economic phenomena."

Here at least is a full and clean-cut statement—if only one had the time to inspect all of its closely packed assumptions. Is literature a "product" in the same sense as sewing-machines or mineral oils, and if so of *what* is it the product? Mr. Burnham mentions the "conscious will," but he can hardly mean that the will can generate works of literature out of itself. At the most he can claim no more than that the will is somehow involved in the production. It will be perhaps simplest here to recommend to attention certain remarks of William

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Butler Yeats, in a now famous passage, on the difference between "the literature of the will and the literature of the imagination." And the same reputable authority may be referred to for a treatment of the precise role played by the "conscious" faculty in the act of creation. Nor need we ponder the question whether the quality of the experience that we have before literary works is so like the pleasures to be derived from other sources that it can safely be covered by such a word as "enjoyed." For the present purpose the most significant of these assumptions is the first—that works of literature are "material objects." For what does this amount to saying but that literary works are identical in kind with all the other objects of the physical universe —that a play by Shakespeare, for example, is metaphysically not different from the paper on which it is printed or the boards on which it is played. The importance of this assumption, of course, is that it leads immediately to the corrolary that literary works are capable of being *known,* like all the other objects of the physical universe, through one or another of the particular categories of that general mode of cognition called science. In Mr. Burnham's own terms, literature "figures," or has its existence, only insofar as it can be jammed into one of these categories. As to which category is selected the answer seems to be quite clear: it is determined by the "context." But this "context" proves to be a rather muddled affair, supplied partly by historical conditions beyond writer and reader, and partly by rather undefined psychological traits. If this is the case, it is hard for us to know what category it is that is most to the point. What Mr. Burnham must mean rather is the simpler word *content,* or the dominating subject-matter of a work, and that in approaching Zola we should use a sociological approach, in approaching Lawrence a psychological approach, and so on.

Now for some reason that I cannot understand Mr. Burnham ascribes to me what he calls the "anthropological" approach. For if anthropology is on the approved list of scientific categories I cannot see how I could offend by pushing it too far, which is probably what is meant by the charge that I have fallen into the "Platonic fallacy of hypostatizing a method into an Absolute." How is it possible to push a good thing too far? And does not Mr. Burnham himself perform a little hypostatizing when he makes empirical investigation the *only* test of truth of reality, as he does by implication all throughout the discussion. The trouble must be once again that anthropological is one of those confusing words with a double reference; it is a label at once for a method and for the body of discoveries which that method had made possible. In the sense that I have tried to use some of the latter for interpretative purposes it is true that I have profited by the

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application of the scientific method. But it is not true, as Mr. Burnham would agree, that this is the method that I employed in my essay. The most important of the discoveries made by modern anthropology through the scientific mode of cognition is, in my opinion, the fact that men everywhere in the world are governed by a quite different mode of cognition.

To this mode any number of labels may be applied, but "mythical" has the advantage of suggesting the concrete form in which it is to be discovered in all the literatures of the world. Myth, like science, is at once a method and a body of ordered experience. And it is in the sense of a method that I undertook to employ it as a means of formal interpretation in the essay to which Mr. Burnham makes objection. It has been my opinion, and I believe that it is the opinion of more and more people in England and America, that literature has long been suffering from the ravages of what might be called the Scientific Fallacy in criticism. This is the fallacy, to which Mr. Burnham gives the latest expression, when he describes works of literature as material objects. It is the fallacy which has led in our time to that two-fold process of reduction which consists first in reducing literature to its abstract content, and then in reducing this content to one or another of the scientific categories. Of course if we are to assign a beginning to the tendency we must go back to the monumental distortions of Taine in the mid-nineteenth century. But I believe that the tendency, insofar as the vague materialism of Taine has sharpened into an ever more narrow political doctrine, has reached its climax of ineptitude in our time.

For must it be repeated that the real objection to the application of science to art and literature is not to science as such but to its fundamental inappropriateness in these realms. Unfortunately, it is much less difficult to say what literature is not than to say what it is: the anatomy of the imagination will probably remain the last challenge to the scientific mind. But we *can* say that although the literary work is something material in the sense that it must have a vehicle—the "context"—the work itself represents a formal transcendence into something that cannot be deduced from any of its parts. This is what is more simply expressed in the formula that *what* a writer says is only relatively important. And this is the teasing fact that the abstracting type of intellect is unable or unwilling to accept. The scientific method is necessarily limited to the subject-matter of a work, which includes of course the opinions, views, and judgments of a writer along with their concrete expressions, because science is a method which requires a temporary hypothetical spatialization of its object. The procedure of the so-called scientific critic of literature is the following: the

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isolation of one or another aspect of the object, the reference of this aspect to an already completed scientific or quasi-scientific structure of logic (philosophical, psychological or political), and the evaluation of the whole object in terms of the latter. (Thus, André Malraux's latest novel is reduced to a political phenomenon, analyzed in terms of Marxist political philosophy, and rejected by the critic as being inconsistent with this philosophy.) The apparent effort is to replace the original concrete æsthetic structure by an altogether abstract structure of thought. But, as a matter of fact, the æsthetic structure has not been affected at all. It retains its original imponderable character.

An adequate or comprehensive method of literary interpretation would have to begin with the recognition of this imponderable character of the aspects involved in any whole literary organism. For a work of literature, which is the constatation of the organic processes of the imagination, is capable of being grasped only in terms of its own inner pattern of movement—in terms like expansion and contraction, tension and rest, conflict and resolution. Where but from literature itself can we hope to derive an appropriate mode for such an analysis? From the study of the important works of the literary past there emerges a pattern of development of such distinctness and regularity that we are compelled to accept it as a *norm* for all the rest. This norm is the pattern described by the successive stages in the dialectic struggle between matter and form represented in its most vivid and concentrated human terms in the classic myth. To employ this pattern of development as a method for criticism is of course actually to establish an analogy between what is ideal, the abstract formal process, and what is real, the particular work in question. Insofar as it is an analogical method it bears a resemblance to the so-called method of four-fold interpretation, of the medieval schoolmen, with their reading of works on the separate levels of the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical. But the important difference is that while the analogy established by the schoolmen was always with a *particular* myth of the past the analogy here is simply with the general formal structure of the myth.

Is such a method an Absolute, as Mr. Burnham complains? The answer must be that as a method it is an absolute exactly to the extent that the scientific method is an absolute. It is one of the modes of cognition, and as such must be accepted as valid within the field of its application. One cannot disagree with Mr. Burnham that the legitimacy of a method is to be tested by its results. There is the point of view always from which no mode of human perception can lay safe claims to being an Absolute. And all that is maintained here is that the "mythical" is the most relevant approach to literature be-

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cause it is most faithful to the object: it produces more "integrated" results, as Mr. Burnham admits.

But this metaphysical herring is dragged across the path, it would appear, merely as a preparation for a second and even more drastic accusation—that, in the name of Myth, I would beckon us all back to "the dark religion of the blood".

(II) *Myth and Reason.* Despite every precaution, even such as was indicated by the sub-title, it was perhaps inevitable that some people should leap to such a conclusion. And there is little that can be done here beyond repeating, in somewhat more generalized terms, what is already implicit in the discussion of Mann. In the complete myth is projected a concrete and dynamic rehearsal of the dialectic struggle between the principle of matter and the principle of form. Reason, which is in one sense on the side of form, is in another sense, through its identification with will, on the side of matter. "Pure" reason, by which is meant the divorcing of the logical faculty from the other human faculties, ends up by becoming just as much a force for disruption as pure matter. The human organism at any given moment is the precariously sustained equilibrium between these two opposed principles of forces, and the myth is its complete expression. It seems to me that there is nothing in this account that is in the least hostile to the spirit of science insofar as science is a method devoted to the study and control of the laws of matter. But it does place scientific reason in a dynamic relation to something else—to the laws governing the moral and psychological economy of the organism as a whole.

Now the reason that some people respond even to the sound of the word myth with horror and trepidation is that they confuse the notion of myth as the particular equilibriums of the past with the notion of myth as a process. They fail to recognize that for society, as for the individual, the materials of experience undergo an unbroken process of modification and change. If the individual does not achieve a fresh reordering of these materials, as Freud has explained, he will relapse into a former state of equilibrium, which is indistinguishable from the state of death. In the same way every myth, which corresponds to the once strenuously accomplished equilibrium of a culture, becomes in time inadequate to the situation, something dead, and therefore "false and dangerous". Any myth constructed in our time which would fail to take into account the development of the scientific impulse together with all its triumphs of the laboratory would indeed be a retrogression into the false stability of the grave. We must conclude with Rimbaud—*tenir le pas gagné.* In brief, it must be understood that while every myth corresponds only to a temporary resolution of a conflict, the conflict itself is ever alive, ever becoming involved

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in new terms of experience, and ever seeking a resolution. In every epoch there are the old myths of the past, haunting the present like a fixation of childhood, and the new myths struggling to be born. And it is a mistake not to be able to tell them apart.

(III) *Myth and Society.* This is not the place to describe the role of myth in social and political organization. At the moment the triumph of the myth, the dead and false myth, almost everywhere in the world, and with it the imminent destruction of all those values which Western Europe had earned through its agony of three centuries, should be enough to persuade us of its reality. It should teach us that in history, as in finance, bad myths tend to drive out good myths, and that our only salvation lies in a purification of our symbols toward the creation of a new myth which will correspond to the stage at which the more conscious and responsible actions of mankind have arrived.

In my essay on Mann I attempted to show that in our romantic liberal bourgeois culture the so-called artist-type alone has exhibited both in his life and his work the problems involved in being and the proper mode of their resolution. My final point was that in the figure of Joseph this artist-type finally attains his complete integration through an identification of his personal destiny with the highest spiritual ideals and aspirations of the race. This was not to suggest a too facile identification of the artist as man with the artist as symbol. Whatever particular weaknesses, follies, or errors of judgment the artist may commit as a man does not affect the symbolic value of his work. This was what I intended by declaring that, in the last analysis, Joseph is a figure of the imagination. And perhaps it would be better to have said—the moral imagination. In that realm the potential is realized with a purity and vividness with which it can never unfortunately be realized in actuality; it is romantic to think that it might be; and it has become time for us to replace our romanticism with a recognition of this fact. For without symbols we are lost; we are without any means of integrating thought and action, therefore without direction. We may live in the colorless world provided by a purely scientific and valueless view of life for a certain length of time. But the moment must come when the old exiled symbols, dressed up in their gaudy shrouds, will reappear across this world and claim it for their own—unless they are met with a strong resistance.

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Paris Letter

People change; Paris never. After twelve years' absence, the former fact gratifies as much as the latter. For the fairy duchesses of the Parc Monceau, tearfully ruined, have hastened to the equally secure if less amorous patronage of the WPA; the sensitive well-dressed young men, their unfinished novels still unfinished, have sailed home to America to help in Dad's business; and, save for the hardy perennials (Nina Hamnett standing up in the select to accuse Robert McAlmon of being too intellectual) and the melancholy flocks of insufficiently political political refugees, the cafés contain principally working professionals. Working, what is more, double shift, for France has no WPA Writers' and Painters' projects, and they must both work at their work and work for their livings: of four practising poets taken at random, one binds books, one proofreads, one lectures, one draws cartoons—and *everybody* writes articles. La Bohème is long since dead; and the bogus Bohemia based on monthly allowances, duly wept, sung, and only half regretted, has in its turn passed into history, its place taken by a sterner quotidian reality productive in French artists of a remarkably intense, if not alas always soundly Marxian, preoccupation with economics and politics. And Paris is the pleasanter for it.

Such the basic situation; but artistic Paris only begins to emerge from the summer doldrums. Galleries reopen quietly with a few paid shows by various ambassador's and minister's darlings; the new autumn books have not yet begun to appear; and even the Revolution, which has been, like everybody else, *en vacances,* camping in the more uncomfortable and exploited parts of Normandie, (on the pretext, one supposes, of 'turning to the peasantry') has only just re-entered. Out of a dead level of apathy and inactivity there rose during the summer only the desperate G. P. U. kidnapping in the heart of Paris of Rudolf Klément (of the secretariat of the Fourth International) whose headless and legless trunk was found floating in the Seine at Meulan, and that International's nevertheless successful First World Conference.

The launching, by André Breton and Diego Rivera, of the FIARI (Fédération Internationale de l'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant) has at last provided a rallying-point for those artists who have of late grown more and more uncomfortable in the increasingly smelly Stalinist ambience, especially since Nizan's sharp attack in *Commune* on Friedmann's intendedly panegyric *De la sainte Russie à l'U. R. S. S.*—a symptomatic and monitory whip-crack of an Inquisitional

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'discipline' which by the cumulative logic of Stalinism's increasing hypocritical betrayals of communism, can less and less permit its artistis even adumbrations of truth or semblances of independence. Yet for the unconsciously venal, the perquisites are hard to give up; and, however, profound their satisfaction at the recovery of integrity and liberty, the reception awaiting them in the revolutionary camp looks to contain more of justice than of coddling, of slightly distrustful forgiveness than of wildly enthusiastic acclaim. Considering that what is needed in FIARI is the broadest possible base, it is unfortunate, though probably not fatal, that Breton, long the pope of surréalisme, slightly confused the issue by attempting to transfer into the new organization some of the special tenets of the old, plumping in the manifesto for the Vienna Dreambook school of psychology. For not only will outright Gestaltists and Behaviorists look askance, but many honest writers whom the ignorant asinities of Otto Rank have reminded of the magnetism, hypnotism, and Christian Science excesses of the past century, will hesitate to sign a manifesto which seems to imply adhesion, not only to revolutionary liberties, but also to cult limitations. Yet despite this disadvantage, the admirable FIARI has already made excellent progress: more than 50 signatures of leading artists have already come in. The Moscow Frame-up Trials are having their delayed but certain result.

A second stage has now been reached. The Stalinists' self-exposure as unprincipled war-mongers during the recent Czech crisis has broken down another unit in their art-machine; this time it is the pacifist cogs that commence to fly out. Romain Rolland, author of *Jean-Christophe* and dean of French leftist letters ,whom even the Moscow Trials could not apparently awaken, was the first to sign the strongly anti-war manifesto put out jointly by the Teachers' Union and the Post Telegraph and Telephone Union issued the first of October, thus marking his definitive break with the war-policy of 'collective security'. In view of the extent of his moral influence, it is to be supposed his example will be followed by many French artists.

Such breaks in France, where art clusters in schools and groups, show a special courage. It is difficult, when one has been 'taken care of' by an efficient international machine, to set out on one's own again as an independent artist, and, slanderously abused from one side for one's political honesty, to be as roundly damned from the other for one's literary style. André Gide is a case in point. Everyone praises Gide's honesty in writing *Retour de l'U. R. S. S.* and its sequels; yet, because of their dislike of his literary qualities, the literary ultra-left regard this self-appointed president of the republic of letters with a deep distrust, suggesting that, his sensitive nose having warned him of the imminent decomposition of Stalinism, he is profiting as much from his espousal of the revolutionary cause as is the cause from him. There is still quoted with much gusto in such

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circles the poem 'La conversion de Gide' from Benjamin Péret's *Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là,* an extraordinary book published in 1935, and very little known. Not even Trotsky's irritation with it as 'poésie ouvrieriste' can diminish the general admiration for this volume, where sheer violence of invective reaches amazing heights. As a double example, 'La conversion de Gide' is perhaps worth quoting:

Monsieur le camarade Gide
entre cul et chemise chante la *Jeune Garde*
et se dit qu'il est temps d'exhiber son ventre comme un drapeau
rouge
Communiste
un peu beaucoup passionément
pas du tout
répondent les couilles de l'enfant de choeur qu'il épile
Tel une tomate agitée par le vent
Monsieur le camarade Gide fait un foutu drapeau rouge
dont aucune salade ne voudrait
un drapeau rouge qui cache une croix
trempée dans le vitriol
et bien francaise comme pas un chien de concierge
qui se mord la queue en entendant hoqueter la *Marseillaise*
qui fait accoucher
Monsieur le camarade Gide

Oui Monsieur le camarade Gide
La faucille et le marteau vous les aurez
la faucille dans le ventre
et le marteau vous le mangerez

This is perhaps a little hard on Gide; *nothing* could be hard enough on the late great Louis Aragon, for many years the principal hope of French letters, hero of *l'affaire Aragon* when he was imprisoned by the French government for a revolutionary poem, whose indisputable brilliance of mind proved unfortunately not to be matched by his integrity of character. It is a melancholy spectacle, that of the man who once wrote such brilliant books as *Le Paysan de Paris* and *Le Libertinage,* now sunk to the rôle of a successful Lavatory Dan as editor of *Ce Soir,* a Parisian equivalent of the *Daily Mirror,* which the French Stalinists have launched as a rival journal to *Paris-Soir,* the cheap, dangerous and immensely successful organ of the French sugar trust. Sic transit . . .

The literary scene, in the absence as yet of fall publications, remains that of the spring. It has been with some justice said that the two most characteristic French productions are casinos and funerals: the two spectacular sides of the medallion, between which lies

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the thin pure gold of France itself. Little is heard lately of the Jean Cocteau-Christian Bérard Casino save the recent publicly announced arrest of the bird-catcher himself in an opium-raid at Toulon, with the resultant forced resignation of the imprudent police-prefect: and the latest Cocteau literary production was some paid réclame for a night-club singer in *Paris-Soir*. The best book from the right is rather from the Catholic sector: Georges Bernanos' brilliant *Les grandes cimitières sous la lune,* which adequately disposes of General Franco's preposterous pretentions to being a crusader for church and civilization. The surréaliste pompes funèbres, on the other hand, have been issuing regularly from the editorial mortuaries and wending their formal way to the surréaliste cemetery where practically every major literary talent in France has been buried. As for the 'thin pure gold of France itself', it is so thin as to be practically invinsible to this particular naked eye. Certainly it is not Céline's however brilliant Jew-baiting; the best candidate would be the detective story writer Simenon, whose descriptions of France and its civilization are probably more accurate and moving than those of any more formally literary figure.

No, there is no getting away from it: most of the first-rate literary talents of France have been in surréalisme. But just when everyone had given up expecting ever to see the end of surréalisme, internal explosions permit one to observe with relief the first cracks of final breakup appearing in its structure. 'With relief' because it had outlived its superlatively admirable utility. Beside the official channel (or perhaps more accurately the stone-faced tow-pathed lock-guarded canal) of formal French letters, with its monstrous products, the homme-de-lettres and what Ezra Pound quite justly calls 'literachoor', surréalisme spilled out in the escape of a fructifying Meander. But it ultimately rejoined the channel farther on, its banks began to be carefully landscaped by Breton, and for the young it became an 'escape' only in the pejorative sense. For, anti-Academy in inception, it had grown into, not imitation-Academy like the Goncourt et al., but itself a massive anti-Academy Academy—an opposite pole, but a structural parallel. Until recently the only cure seemed to be a success worse than the disease: e. g., Dali, who, keeping one foot in the movement, stepped tentatively with the other into interior decoration (the department-store window in New York, or the couch in red wrinkled satin forming a pair of rouged lips), long since might have expected to hear Breton thundering his excommunication. But Breton has been busy: in Mexico, where his lectures were pettily sabotaged by a wretched Stalinist-Catholic bloc in the reactionary university; and in starting the above-mentioned FIARI, a courageous action which cannot be too highly admired.

Of the recent surréaliste works, the best is Georges Hugnet's *Une Ecriture Lisible,* jointly written with the nineteenth century gothic

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drawings of Kurt Seligman. Though it suffers somewhat from the highly poetick surréaliste vocabulary, haunted by hour-glasses and cross-bows, it is indisputably the work of a fine poet, and is in parts reminiscent of the author's pre-surréaliste *Le Belle en Dormant,* which contains some of the purest and most moving lyricism to be found in a language tending to be heavily literary.

After the strangely beautiful straight surréaliste *De derrière les fagots* of 1934, and the magnificient sheer obscene violence of the political *Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là* mentioned above, Benjamin Péret's latest, *Au paradis des fantômes,* seems rather slight. Perhaps the fact that the author had spent more time fighting against Franco in Spain than in writing poetry may explain this. Yet even in so small a frame, the Péret qualities of impatient power and sardonic anger prove him an undiminishing force, and make it strange that he is not better known in America.

About the luxuriously mounted *Les mains libres* of the poet Paul Eluard and the photographer Man Ray, the less said the better. One is bidden to admire particularly the fact that so good a draughtsman should deliberately choose to draw so cheesily; and as for the accompanying poems, the famous Eluardian quality of delicacy becomes sheer vol-au-vent. But Eluard's more recent *Cours naturel* again reaches his high standard: sensitive lithe delicate poems of a perfect professional mastery. The only cavil is that, though they touch on some very grave subjects, their content is nearly as delicate as their technique. It has been a shock that Eluard's sense of expediency has made so brilliant a poet prefer continuation of his connection with the Stalinist *Commune* to signing the FIARI manifesto.

Politically France is tense. The ten billion francs spent on mobilization, anti-aircraft lighting, and similar measures for scaring the civil population into accepting the cynical sell-out of Czechoslovakia arranged last November, might have been largely saved: nobody but the G.Q.G., the Stalinists and the DelaRoque wing of the fascists wanted to fight anyway. Under the probable parliamentary cover of a Radical-Right alliance, a fierce intensification of employers' attacks upon the fragmentary vestiges of the 1936 workers' gains is probable. Franc-scares and further war-scares, with appeals to self-sacrificing patriotism, will probably be used to try to keep the government functionaries from getting their 10% November increase. But no series of however fancy formulæ can forever restrain the slowly mounting anger of the militant French proletariat: at first the Popular Front's skilful stealing back of the gains of the May-June 1936 strikes and now Daladier-la-Guerre's franker methods to the same end. It is far from excluded that the so-often betrayed workers, again summoning their strength and militancy, will reply to the patronal attack with a great strike-wave. In any case, late autumn in Paris bids fair to be considerably brisker than the summer.

Paris, 7 October 1938. SEAN NIALL

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The People's Choice

(as of Oct. 23, 1938)

Mary McCarthy

The Herald-Tribune *Books,* which every Sunday tells America What America Is Reading, last Sunday (October 23) announced that *The Yearling, My Son, My Son!,* and . . . *and Tell of Time* once again headed the fiction best-seller list. Almost all summer and well into the fall, this fiction triumvirate has been reigning unchallenged as the People's Choice. And the fact that two of these novels deal with the post-bellum South and one with pre-war England would seem offhand to confirm the opinion, held by many superior people who never buy best-sellers, that the American public is finding in its reading matter an escape from contemporary social dilemmas.

It is doubtful, however, that the fiction best-sellers contain the key to what America of 1938 is thinking, feeling, and wishing. America of 1938, taken as a whole, is probably not reading novels at all, and even that genteel America which feeds on fiction is reading the newspapers, the news magazines, and the non-fiction best-sellers as well. Indeed, the vogue for "escapist" novels, which followed the depression, is a far less remarkable phenomenon in the publishing world than the rise of the news magazines and the unprecedented increase in the sale of non-fiction, which occurred at the same time. *Gone With the Wind* is not more American than *Life* magazine; it represents, in fact, the American novelist's retreat before *Life* magazine. The romantic novel is not so much an escape for the reader from contemporary realities as it is an escape for the novelist from competition in realism with the journalist and the photographer. Fiction, or, at any rate, popular fiction is being compelled to specialize.

It is possible, of course, that the tale of far-away-and-long-ago not only answers the needs of the novelist but the needs of the reader, too. As journalism is an irritant, it may be a balm for the ache of the times. Undeniably, these tales are being bought and read, but does this testify to the reader's desire or to his docility? "Trends" in the publishing business, as in the movies, are decidedly suspect, for a trend is more likely to originate in the mind of a publisher than in the heart of the public. Just as the movies will follow one success on the subject of, say, racket-busting with a series of variations on the same theme, so the publishers will cap one *Gone With the Wind* with a hundred outsize romances of the Old South. Publishers do not like to take chances; they are forever on the hunt for recipes, for thought-saving devices, and once they have found what they believe is a money-making formula, they will plug it at the expense of everything else on their lists. Comfortable temporarily in the conviction that it was

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the Civil War that put Margaret Mitchell's novel on the map, they are now promoting whatever long chronicles they can get hold of that deal favorably with followers of General Lee. And these chronicles sell, not because the book-buying public, which is chiefly Northern, has been seized with a sudden, belated passion for the Southern cause, but because the book-buying public is exceedingly amenable to suggestion. Naturally, the booksellers and the book clubs, to whom the potential buyer shakily looks for guidance, will have invested—together with the publisher—in the current formula. And finally, the book buyer herself has a certain stake in it. She is unlikely to be more adventurous with her two dollars and a half than were the publishers, the book clubs, and the bookstore owners with their larger sums. She wants a sure thing, and if she enjoyed *Gone With the Wind,* she hopes to enjoy . . . *And Tell of Time* because the subject-matter is similar.

A "natural" best-seller, such as *Gone With the Wind* or *Anthony Adverse* does not depend on its subject-matter for its appeal. A "publisher's" best-seller, which is always an imitation of a "natural," does use its subject-matter as a selling point, not because the subject-matter is intrinsically more attractive than any other, but because the subject-matter serves to remind the potential buyer of the real thing, the original best-seller, the McCoy. Thus, as has been seen, the purchaser of . . . *and Tell of Time* is not investing in the glamour of the Old South but in the glamour of *Gone With the Wind.* The purchaser has not noticed that the publisher's syllogism has an undistributed middle term.

. . . *and Tell of Time* is, it seems to me, a classic example of the "publisher's" best-seller. It has a number of selling points: (a) it deals with the Old South, and novels about the Old South have been popular; (b) it deals with pioneers, and novels about pioneers have been popular; (c) it is a family chronicle, and family chronicles have been popular; and (d) it is seven hundred and twelve pages long, and long books have been popular. But these are facts *about* the book which can be mentioned to great advantage in the blurb but which really have very little relation to what is inside the novel itself. Given these facts, a novel could be lively or it could be a bore, and . . . *and Tell of Time* is an unmitigated bore. A good, tantalizing plot and sharply drawn "real" characters are essential to the readability of a popular novel. But the plot of this novel is meandering and inconclusive: the characters mess around with love, politics, and farming, but they are never particularly successful or particularly unsuccessful in any of these fields. This may be the stuff of life, but it is not the stuff which dreams are made on, and Miss Laura Krey, who has written the book, has an opaqueness of observation and a vulgarity of mind which exclude her from that contemplation of life which is supposed to be the serious, as opposed to the popular, artist's business. The trappings of romance are here, but romance itself is absent. There are the great plantations and the good, obedient darkies with their

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watermelon smiles, the Ku Klux Klan with its wild night raids against the bad niggers who are making the country unsafe for their betters; but against this backdrop the people in the novel are leading just such dull, vegetable, loveless, pointless lives as the readers of best-sellers are supposed to be looking for a vicarious escape from. The characters are as lacking in vitality and in definition as is the plot. The women are actually indistinguishable from each other, and the men nearly so. Miss Krey has a singular weakness in the sensory department which makes it impossible for her to give a clear impression of such a simple thing as a woman's physical beauty. There is marriage in the book, but no sex, illness but no symptoms, farming but no crops growing. Everything is vague, generalized, unpictorial.

Out of the haze of Miss Krey's narrative only the theme emerges sharply. There are really two themes, but one of them makes its point so badly that the reader is likely to miss its significance. This is the theme that says that a woman will do much better if she resigns herself to her husband's way of life than if she holds out for her own. Unfortunately, both the hero and the heroine have such a dreary life, whether they work at cross-purposes or in unison, that the moral lacks conviction. The other theme, which is more successfully dramatized, declares that a man had a hard time getting along back in the Reconstruction period in the Brazos country in Texas because the Federal government kept trying to tell him how to run his life, and only when he got rid of government interference could he manage his affairs successfully. The more stirring episodes of the novel are all concerned with the glorious battle to cheat the Negro of his legal rights, and the indomitable spirit of the Southern gentlemen who drove the Yankee meddlers and Freedmen's Bureaus out of the free, white state of Texas.

To this "escapist" novel which provides no escape, this tale of the past whose most effective passages deliberately echo a contemporary political struggle, this popular story which contains none of the elements of popularity, *The Yearling* makes an interesting contrast.

Mrs. Rawlings' novel, though it coincides in some respects with the current publishers' formula, is actually a "natural." Its setting is Florida of the post-bellum period, but the tropical forest in which it is centered is not truly moored in time or geography; it is the Garden of Eden of a child's imagination. *The Yearling* has had a wide sale among adults; it is, however, a child's story, and it may even become a child's classic. Unlike Miss Krey's book, it has an extraordinary acuteness of sensory perception. The taste and smell of food, the look and feel of animals, the color of foliage, flowers, and crops, all appear to be brand-new. The twelve-year-old hero of the story, inhabits a universe of wonder in which each fresh sensation is a discovery that must be weighed, examined, and laboriously charted. To her observation of the natural world, Mrs. Rawlings adds a good, simple plot involving a fearful bear who is to be hated and hunted down and a

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delightful fawn who is to be loved and finally relinquished. There are a few good, simple characters: a sensitive, sympathetic poor-white father who knows all the ways of bird and beast, a brusque fat mother who is an infallibly good cook, and some wild, bearded men whose hearts are as soft as their manners are uncouth. Naturally, it is a sentimental story, for the world it creates is a charmed one: pain exists, but there is always an antidote; hardship exists, but there is not a hint of misery or squalor.

The Yearling can be classified as an "escapist" novel, not because it deals with the past or with an unfamiliar locale, but because it transports the reader back to a time in his own experience when the father was an unconquerable and supremely resourceful figure, a kind of medicine man or rain-maker, who combined potency and accessibility in a wonderful satisfying way.

My Son, My Son!, the best-seller concocted by an English book-reviewer, also exploits the father theme, but in a quite different way. Though the greater part of its action takes place before the War, it is not one of those anti-macassar novels which specialize in opening the cedar chest of the past. Written in the first person by a man who is supposed to be a stupendously successful English novelist, a sort of Arnold Bennett, it tells the story of two men who rose from humble beginnings to stations of wealth and public renown and who try to give their sons everything that they themselves lacked in childhood and youth. The first man, the novelist, lacked both love and material comforts, and he, consequently, showers his son with luxury and indulgent affection. The outcome is unfortunate. The son grows up to be a cad and is finally hanged for murder. The second man, a gilt-edged interior decorator of Irish descent, wanted to become an Irish revolutionary but lacked family encouragement and financial backing; he, therefore, grooms his son to be an Irish rebel, with the result that the boy is shot in a barn during the Troubles by his childhood playmate, the novelist's son, who, in his caddish way, has enlisted after the War in the Black and Tans. The moral is that no man has two lives: if he tries to mould his son's career to compensate for his own frustrations, he will be punished for it.

The American reviewers whose opinions are quoted on the jacket all speak enthusiastically of this novel's vitality. "Lavish in its sheer motion and life," says Harold Strauss. "His book is very much alive," says Iris Barry. John Cournos goes several steps further. "All of life is here," he declares. Certainly, the energy of the book has a great deal to do with its popularity. It was clearly written at high speed with a lavish stylistic carelessness. It is full of melodramatic incidents and highly colored characters. It is a sort of grab-bag into which war, revolution, business deals, night life, actresses, and sea-captains have been tossed with small regard for logic or coherence. It does not make much sense, but, as one of the reviewers quoted above might have said, it carries you along. The one ingredient it skimps on is sex. The

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novelist who is telling the story appears only to have slept with his wife, an inhibited and extremely unattractive woman, and once with a London bitch, a stage designer, whom his son speedily wins away from him. (Indeed, if there is any trend to be observed in these three best-sellers, it is a trend toward sexual purity.)

Aside from its energy, the book has another element which has doubtless endeared it to its public. That is, its double-barrelled plot. It is a success story which suddenly goes into reverse. Thus the reader is allowed to identify himself with the Man Who Gets Ahead, and also to revenge himself on that Man for being exceptional. As in the David-Absalom story from which the book gets its title, the hero is raised up to almost godlike heights, and then, as a punishment for his pride, quickly, brutally cast down to the level of common humanity. It is interesting that in both the popular Biblical story and in the popular modern novel the revenge is visited on the person of the son and only indirectly on the father. This is, I suppose, because the reader has so thoroughly identified himself with the father that the father must not be permitted personally to fail: only a certain part of him, a projection of the "bad" side of him, his son, can be shamefully laid low.

Of these three best-sellers, all are escapist in the sense that they offer the reader a vicarious life. But in this sense all popular literature is escapist, and, indeed, all literature can be said to contain an element of escapism. Yet in the sense that the word is being used today, none of these novels quite meets the bill. None of them offers the reader a one-way ticket to a glorious, adventurous and remote past where present-day problems dissolve in the mist of romance. These best-sellers, judged by what is inside them rather than by their subject-matter or milieu, are just about what best-sellers have always been. When one compares them to the best-sellers of five and ten years ago, only one important difference is apparent. Five and ten years ago, many of the best-sellers exuded cultural pretensions. The "literary," decorative, and pseudo-philosophical novel had a great vogue: *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* and, more recently, James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* exemplified the type. Today, the best-sellers (and this applies not only to the three current leaders but to the whole list) are singularly unambitious. Mrs. Rawlings' book is well written, but neither it nor any of the others gives the book-buyer the notion that he is improving himself by reading it. This is a step in the direction of greater frankness on the part of both author and audience, but what it portends I cannot say. It may be that the gap between the popular taste and the cultivated taste, which the women's clubs, the book supplements, the daily reviewers, and the book clubs once attempted to bridge, is again widening, and a return to the era of Elinor Glyn, E. M. Hull and Zane Grey is being foreshadowed. Or it may be that nobody takes fiction very seriously any more.

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Books

ALLEN TATE AS NOVELIST

THE FATHERS. By Allen Tate. G. P. Putnam's Sons. $2.50.

I have seen Mr. Tate's novel described by one reviewer as a story told with great distinction but small success, and this, it seems to me, is a judgment that rests on a very limited notion of what the novel may and can do. *The Fathers* does not have many of the familiar satisfactions of good novels, but it has its own satisfactions. It has no intimacy; it is not warm or embracing or captivating. Much of its interest is formally aesthetic. In the old as well as in the current sense of the word, it is a *fine* book—precise, a little rarefied. A traditionalist in his literary as well as in his social preference, Mr. Tate has had in mind the wild abnormalities of the Greek dramatic fables set within the limitations of strictest form but, unlike many traditionalists, he has not forgotten the wildness for the strictness. It should be observed that when, as a critic, Mr. Tate speaks of form he does not so much mean the classic linear bounding of events as a consistency and significance of tone. And tone is what he chiefly relies on for the form of his novel. The fable of *The Fathers* is one of violence, its form is one of delicacy, indirection, understatement; and it is in the intended paradox of form and content that the point of the book is to be found.

And the intellectual point as well as the aesthetic point: for quite apart from the formal tension which the paradox creates, it also creates the modulations of Mr. Tate's judgment on the old South. The violent fable carries the blame which is contained in his judgment; the form carries his extenuation.

The fable itself—so far as I can make it out: it is not always perspicuous—is a tragedy seen in two ways. From one point of view, it is the tragedy of people who have the possibility but not the intention of virtue. "Now that men cannot be alone," says Mr. Tate's narrator, "they cannot bear the dark and they see themselves as innately good but betrayed by circumstances that render them pathetic. Perhaps some of the people in this story are to be pitied, but I cannot pity them; none of them was innately good. They were all, I think, capable of great good but that is not the same thing as *being* good." But from another point of view, they are people in some part betrayed by circumstances, at the mercy of a culture that is breaking up. "Why cannot life change without tangling the lives of innocent persons?" asks the narrator. "Why do innocent persons cease their innocence and become violent in themselves that such great changes may take place?"

But whether seen as individuals of free moral will or as victims

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of cultural change, these are people who live by a culture and not by a morality, by a code and not by the intention and habit of virtue. Their society, on its surface, is coherent and flawless; but they themselves are prevented by its very coherence from having any consciousness of what the narrator calls the "abyss"—the forces of evil, personal or social.

This disparity between the forms of the old society and the action of its members makes up, it seems, at least half of Mr. Tate's judgment of the old South. The disease of which it perished, he seems to be saying, was the disease of all highly codified societies: a codification so thorough that consciousness no longer need function. The old South destroys itself in this novel from lack of mind.

It is a cliché of Southern fiction, but apparently a valid cliché, the idea of a social fabric of great elegance hiding putrescence and being rent by acts of blind violence. In *The Fathers* we have the familiar theme of a half-imbecile refinement—Mr. Jarman sitting immured among his eggshells and slopjars, writing his history of the Ice Age in the manner of Gibbon; and his sister absorbed by her ills and her food. And we have, on a different level, a young woman, in most respects decent, out of an obscure hatred using the prerogatives which the South gave its matrons to make her husband's sister into a harmless—but eventually harmful—nincompoop; then the familiar Southern figure of the young man, talented and violent, who sees through the code and cannot be contained by it, yet cannot quite break out of it; and a worthy father so wholly formalized that conversation is for him a chess game in which he feels brutalized if the gambit he offers is refused, who has all the courage in the world to hold a political position against his community but not imagination enough not to cut off his son for taking an opposite stand. Here, too, is slavery understood in all its human aspects, and hated—seen in the apocalyptic vision of George Rozier riding in the "tournament" on the back of his mulatto half-brother: in effect, of course; actually he had only sold the man for the price of a good mare.

This would seem to be the perfect indictment of a vanished culture. But we know that Mr. Tate attaches the greatest value to the tradition he seems to attack and we look for the extenuation. To me Mr. Tate's expectation of great spiritual good from the Southern tradition has always seemed not incomprehensible but desperate. For as a critic he has spoken of the smallness of the Southern literary effort; he has reprobated the old South's infatuation with politics; he has dismissed the genteel tradition, explained the spiritual harm slavery worked, and demonstrated the failure of religion in the South to create a sufficient human ideal. On what then, beside geography and a dislike of industrialism, capitalism and Marxism, does Mr. Tate base his expectations? Apparently it comes down to the tone and manner of the old South—to its style.

Obviously, from any point of view, aesthetic or cultural, style

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does not exist as an entity alone, and so Mr. Tate's expectations from the Southern style must seem puzzling or sentimental or a stick or a metaphor with which to beat something. And obviously the *tour de force* of apologetics which, in effect, the style of *The Fathers* is, is not convincing as such. But for the moment the factitiousness and even the dangers of Mr. Tate's intellectual position can be put aside. What on this occasion needs comment is the aesthetic result of his preoccupation with style—the strange tension of his novel which comes from the brutality of the "abyss" being set against the narrative's delicacy and control. There is, to be sure, perhaps a certain preciosity in the control—perhaps inevitable to anyone who undertakes to send a prose work based on stylistic exactitude into a literary world not very sensitive to precision. But *The Fathers* is still an encouragement to those who think there is much to be done, in directions that are not Mr. Tate's, with words precisely used and forms precisely planned.

LIONEL TRILLING.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONTROL

TRE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ACT. By George Herbert Mead. The University of Chicago Press. $5.00.

Since Mead's death in 1931, the University of Chicago Press has published, under the editorship of Professor Charles W. Morris, three volumes of his unfinished papers and of material from students' lecture notes. Together with *The Philosophy of The Present,* the Carus Lectures for 1930, also left not quite ready for publication, and edited by A. E. Murphy, these three volumes contain all of Mead's thought that the dilligent labor of editors has been able to salvage. In the first of the volumes, entitled *Mind, Self and Society,* are to be found Mead's contributions to social psychology. The second, *Movements of Thought in The Nineteenth Century,* is perhaps the least valuable of the volumes, although it contains three or four very brilliant essays. In this last volume are embodied Mead's efforts to lay a broad foundation for what C. W. Morris has called "systematic pragmatism."

For men striving to live fully abreast of their day, Mead has many extremely valuable suggestions to offer, because he recognized as the most urgent intellectual task of our generation the need to hasten the assimilation of science into our culture. That philosophy, whenever it has been vital and relevant to the world in which it flourished, has concerned itself centrally with the implications of science, is a commonplace that Mead did not discover. But he realized with singular depth and freshness that it was necessary to draw out the implications of abstract scientific findings beyond the range of

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their technical context. And he also realized the need to introduce scientific method in fields which have hitherto stubbornly resisted its application.

In this respect, as in many others, Mead broke with traditional philosophy. For the philosopher's concern with science has been too often instinct with a deep, if not always conscious, antagonism. While philosophers have used science for their own ends whenever they could, they have always sought to limit its scope and to explain away its disturbing implications. Seldom have they been willing to accept it as heartily as Mead did; perhaps because seldom have they possessed so thorough an understanding of the nature of its method and of the meaning of its findings.

As a result of his understanding of the proper jurisdiction of science, Mead was able to perceive that knowledge can not transcend the world within which it functions. And this in turn commits him to a whole-hearted naturalism. But he did not take the term "naturalism" to be synonymous with "materialism," either "mechanistic" or "dialectical." For materialism is grounded on the traditional assumption that the objective of the scientific quest is to reveal to us the essential nature of the world; while Mead took the objective to be the achievement of control. The materialist of course believes that the essential nature of the world is "matter." The mechanist concieves of matter in the billiard-ball manner of Newtonian metaphysics. And the dialectical materialist conceives of it in an essentially confused manner which can be traced in its origins to the poetic sayings of Heraclitus, a mystic aristocrat of ancient Ephesus, who projected into the universe the social antagonisms of which he was a victim, and thought cosmic development came about from the clashing of immanent forces. But Mead was able to show, through elaborate analysis, that the formulas of science are neither actual nor hypothetical pictures of objects which lie beyond the range of ordinary perceptual experience. It is true that science is usually supposed to deal with "hypothetical objects." But since experimental science must submit its theories to the test of immediate experience, its formulations are more properly interpreted as in fact statements whose function is to control our actual world.

To show that scientific formulations are methods of control is to show in passing the interrelation that must exist between thought and action, if the former is to be meaningful and the latter rational; in other words, it is to show that the task of thought is to guide experience, and that of experience must be to furnish the material and test the adequacy of thought. One hears these days a great deal of glib talk about the connection between thought and action. But much of it comes from men whose dogmatic acceptance of alleged political "axioms" shows how inconsistent and shallow is their empiricism.

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Since scientific formulations are methods of control, they can be of no use to those philosophers who are bent on throwing doubt on the existence of the world as it reveals itself to unreflective commonsense. The activities of the scientist presuppose the world of unreflective experience from which problems arise. Therefore, science can not force us to believe in the subjectivity of qualities and values, for these are part of the perceptual evidence on which the scientist depends for the verification of his hypotheses. Unless he takes them for granted as objective he cannot advance a step. It is by means of actual observations which depend on the scientist's perception of the qualities of the world and which are made with the aid of instruments the existence of which it never occurs to the scientist to doubt, that he is able to decide whether his formulas can be accepted or must be discarded. These observations "sweep out a great deal of riff-raff known as epistemology."

The uncritical reader can easily interpret Mead's doctrine to be a variant of phenomenalism; and the heresy hunters of the orthodox left will no doubt raise the cry of idealism. The danger of misinterpretation is the greater since Mead incorporated perspectivism into his thought, and held that our knowledge is never of things-by-themselves but is always about things-in-perspectives. But Mead does not deny that we can know there is a world—that we take for granted since our knowledge—activity goes on within it. What he denies is that we can know or that it means anything to want to know, what is its nature or essence. We never know the nature of the world. All we can ever know is how it behaves.

Although Mead's elaboration of a philosophy of science is of great value, more valuable still, and more original perhaps, is his contribution to social psychology. For instead of seeking to explain the social activities of human animals in terms of their pre-existing minds, Mead shows how minds and selves develop from the group activity of animals who in the process of evolution come by certain neurological equipment. When the individual is able to anticipate within himself, in the form of incipient behaviour, the reactions of others to his gestures, the gestures become significant signs for the individual who makes them, and we can say of him that he has come into the possession of a mind. Of all forms of gesture, the most important is of course language. But the equipment of an animal endowed with mind does not consist merely of spoken language, but of all types of significant signs which he is able to use, and of the organized responses which these signs are able to call out. This is what ideas and thoughts mean. They are not something which goes on only in the brain. They are inhibited activity of a very complex sort, "telescoped" into aptitudes for arrested or delayed behavior. And although in an account of their mechanism the central nervous system must necessarily play a very important role, our whole organism is involved in their production, particularly our hands, whose

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activity is basic in the formation of our notions of physical things.

The development of the self takes place *pari pasu* with the development of mind, out of the activities of animals within a social context. What defines the self is its reflexivity, the fact that it can be both subject and object at the same time. And this is possible through the fact that the animal's neurological equipment permits him to inhibit overt action and enables him to enact, incipiently, in his own organism, the responses of others to his own gestures. We have a self when our organism is able to take the role of the other. But the role thus taken is not that of a single individual, but that of an organized group— in Mead's term, "a generalized other."

It would be hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of Mead's psychology for social theory. Consider its emphasis on the social origin of the self. The implications of Mead's theory lead directly to a conception of the social group as an interactive enterprise, within which the animal develops into an individual self through the intricate relations of opposition no less than of cooperation with the group. We have here then the much needed resolution of the antithesis of individual and society. "Individual" and "society" are polar terms. The individual is not prior to society, nor is society prior to the interacting individuals who constitute it. An individual outside of society can be no more than a chunk of palpitating protoplasm, without mind, self, or personality. But the values of a society have to be enjoyed by those who are implicated in their creation, if they are to be called values at all. Neither the fascist subservience of the individual to society, nor the presumptions to leadership of a self-elected bureaucracy, will find comfort in this theory. Mead's theory will not allow us to conceive the individual atomistically. Neither does it appeal to the mystic confusions of organicism. And while it does not obfuscate the individual's relations of dependence on society, it does not negate his real value. More still, Mead's theory has a profound implication for the science of value and for ethics. One of the most urgent needs of our day is to replace the current subjectivistic theories with a theory which does justice to the essentially social and objective nature of value. Another is to contruct an ethical theory which abandons the traditional conceptions of moral responsibility. Until now, as we know, ethics has placed responsibility for his actions solely on the individual. We are coming gradually to recognize, however, the importance of the social determinants of the individual's conduct. But our ethical judgments still refer to the individual in isolation, and neglect the social context which determines the action and furnishes the individual with the instruments by means of which he accomplishes it.

I do not claim that Mead has been the only thinker to offer an adequate solution of the antithesis between individual and society. A similar theory has been proposed by R. M. MacIver, and there must undoubtedly be others. Nor do I mean to claim that Mead was

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concerned with the elaboration of a concrete political theory. The claim is that Mead's account of the genesis of mind and the self furnishes the sociologist and the political theorist with a well elaborated scientific foundation. Our traditional conception of the individual has its roots in a diffuse theological notion of the soul, while Mead's is susceptible of empirical verification. Mead did not draw out all the implications of his thought. He was however quite aware of the fertility of his conceptions, and in the last section of *Mind, Self and Society* sketched some of these implications out. His thought did not register our contemporary awareness of the struggle of classes in our modern world. In so far, it is deficient. But it is not defective, for the conception of the class struggle can be easily brought into it without serious reconstructions of Mead's fundamental ideas.

There is no space in which to refer, however hastily, to a number of other aspects of Mead's philosophy which give it special relevance to us. But a few words at least must be said about his theory of history. One of the problems to which he gave much fruitful thought was the problem of time. For Mead the past is generated in the present, for the latter is the locus of reality. Time is not a medium, existing indepedently of the physical universe and within which it moves. And this explains why each generation must reconstruct the past in accord with the needs of the present. The contemporary historian may think that he is approaching a fixed past through his own more accurate account. But actually what he is doing is creating a past. Thus history becomes a methodological blue-print which justified itself in terms of the successful control it enables us to achieve of our future.

It will be some time before we are able to adjudge precisely the value of Mead's contribution to contemporary thought, for an exact estimate must wait until his ideas have been translated into terms available to others besides professional philosophers, and that is a slow process. It will be difficult to estimate how original was his contribution to the tradition of pragmatism. For Mead worked in the closest cooperation with Dewey since their early days in Michigan; they went together to Chicago; and even after Dewey left Chicago the cross-fertilization of their minds must have continued until Mead's premature death. But it is not too early to assert with confidence that his contribution is of very great value. And for this reason students of philosophy will be grateful to Professor Charles W. Morris and his associates, whose arduous editorial labor saved for us the fertile material of Mead's lectures and unfinished papers which have appeared in this volume and in the two previous posthumous ones.

ELISEO VIVAS

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TRILOGY IN PROGRESS

NO STAR IS LOST. By James T. Farrell. Vanguard. $3.00.

Some years ago I met Jim Farrell at a cocktail party. It was one of those literary parties where writers strut their stuff, hangers-on wallow in an ecstasy of self-identification and booze, and a little business is done on the sidelines. Farrell was all aglow with ideas, drink and his usual belligerency. He got into many arguments. There was one argument in particular, with a writer whose meretricious novel had been ballyhooed into a masterpiece by the publisher and a critics' claque—both the writer and the novel are now forgotten. The argument got hotter and hotter, until Farrell finally ended it with the words:

"You're a phony!"

In fact, Farrell might have been speaking of many writers of the 20's. They were overwhelmed by the depression of the 1930's, but their pretences survived, in new forms, in the "proletarian" novelists who set out to "revolutionize" literature. Novelists who knew nothing of workers writing about the workers. Novelists who forced life and literature into arbitrary patterns decorated with clichés. Novelists who magnified their own little lives and ambitions with the mighty upward movement of the working class—a typical "Jew boy makes good" story was refurbished into a proletarian epic!

Proletarian criticism was even worse than proletarian literature. Never was literature and life, history and theory, tortured so systematically and brutally to justify the most amazingly unreal conceptions. James Farrell escaped all that, despite the pressure upon him to submit to a phony proletarianism in literature. He was too honest and too much the artist to submit. He engaged in polemics, indulged in sharp criticisms, was forced to develop and formulate his own critical conceptions, clarifying the function of literature in general and its relation to social revolt in particular. But, above all, Farrell concentrated on writing about the life he knew, creating the epic of Studs Lonigan—an achievement without any parallel in American literature.

It has been said of the Studs Lonigan series that its realism is static. Perhaps, but it is a realism that fits the milieu and its people. They do not revolt, these people, they do not try consciously to react upon and change their environment. But *Studs Lonigan* is a finer picture than any other I know of that peculiar "revolt" which refuses to accept conditions passively and yet knows nothing of the creative thing to do about it. Most people accept submissively their environment and the life it imposes upon them. Others become conscious rebels. Still others, because of limitations of character, time and place, revolt in a manner that simply destroys them. They are driven to the

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revolt of drinking, fighting, whoring—the kind of revolt typified by Studs Lonigan.

Yet *Studs Lonigan* is no unrelieved naturalism; for underlying the objectivity, the brutality and horrors is an impelling sympathy—you feel, always, the writer's pity for these people and his understanding of their tragedy. Toward the end of the Lonigan series Farrell is already moving away from the limitations of naturalism, moving from mere sensory impressions to the creative inner life, from the one-dimensional writing where we simply *see* people to that three-dimensional writing where we begin to understand.

Those beginnings in *Studs Lonigan* appear to be moving toward larger fulfillment in Farrell's new series. The first volume in that series was *A World I Never Made* and the second the present work, *No Star is Lost.* In both we meet the same people in the same environment that one met in *Studs Lonigan.* But the movement is in a different direction. Where the earlier series concentrated on Studs Lonigan, moving in the direction of disintegration and disaster, the new series concentrates on Danny O'Neill, whose prototype is Farrell himself, and moves in the direction of a larger world which revolts against environment and tries to master its own destiny.

That larger fulfillment is still only a beginning and a promise in the first two volumes of this series, including *No Star is Lost.* They are still too much like *Studs Lonigan,* a likeness largely imposed by the sameness of material. If these two volumes were to have no successors, they would still leave Farrell's place in American literature to be determined by the Lonigan triology.

But these first two volumes are simply introductory to a series of apparently grand proportions. The fortunes of Danny O'Neill, who at the end of the second volume is only eleven years old, will take us into a larger world that will include the most vital aspects of American life. As the material broadens itself the method will broaden correspondingly, will give more chance for the expression of that three-dimensional writing which already appears in the first two volumes. In that larger world toward which the new series moves, men react upon their environment and are not merely acted upon, they revolt in the effort to change their environment. And as Farrell moves toward this larger world there will be more impressionism and interpretation in his writing and his realism will become more creative while retaining all its honesty and power.

LEWIS COREY

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CROSS-COUNTRY CAMERA

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS. *By Walker Evans. The Museum of Modern Art.* $2.50.

In these eighty-seven photographs of the South and the Eastern Seaboard, Walker Evans says, "Here is what I saw." Margaret Bourke-White's *You Have Seen Their Faces* cries out, "For God's sake, let's do something about it!" Her skillful, melodramatic articulation of sharecroppers' miseries is the fruit of facility acquired in playing-up the spectacular designs of industry. The violent concussion of the Caldwell illustrations is romantic advertising in reverse.

Evans is no propagandist either for heroic enterprise or wretchedness. He sometimes directly excites the social conscience, sometimes implicitly. But clearly the intention is perception objectified. He is a poet-historian who, at his best, speaks in terms of such precision and alarming simplicity as to give his work a universal quality good for all time. These images of our past and contemporary life, reflected through a highly selective and realistic eye, would be the first choice of a curator planning an indestructible archive for future anthropologists. Here is the bold and orderly account of disorder, of shops, junk piles, bedrooms, neighborhoods, fantastic adventures in architecture and decoration, the monstrous clusters of sub-standard warrens, the distinctively typical faces of mixed America. They are familiar, but arrested by Evans's straightforward and ironic lens, they are essential, not commonplace.

Plantation gardens, mountain brooks and sleepy valleys do not interest Evans. Rather he works with "whatever wears man's smudge and shares man's smell." A cactus table plant struggling out of an ice cream freezer, an auto-graveyard spilled across a pasture have pictorial values for him not found in grand views or sophisticated ornamentation. From torn bill posters he extracts varieties of non-representational design. In a dingy barber shop in Atlanta he discovers an interior as rich in tones and spatial patterns as the film can record. In such recordings, which are the photographic equivalent of the plastic artist's recasting of given material, Evans makes expressive the apparently insignificant aspects of our civilization.

When he is least interesting, he is mute or trivial, never counterfeit. And his most disturbing characteristic is a detachment so strict that it seems discharged of humanity. This results in the depersonalized quality of a frozen section. Lincoln Kirstein, in an interesting historical and appreciative essay, refers to Evans's "unsparing frankness" as "a purely protestant attitude". This is the price of sharp and unsentimental insight, especially in an artist so keenly and exclusively attentive to man and his monuments. The chief complaint about these reproductions is that there are so few of them. This sectional anthology demands that Walker Evans cover the country.

DINSMORE WHEELER.

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DIRECTIONS—NEW OR OLD?

NEW DIRECTIONS, 1938. *Edited by James Laughlin IV. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.* $2.50.

It is not supposed to be good form to look gift horses in the mouth. And the annual *New Directions* is certainly a gift horse to those interested in writing, providing, as it does, a place where one can read the newest work of "writers whose interest in problems of technique places their work beyond the commercial market." To quote further from the editor's Preface: "I conceive of the collection as a sort of exhibition gallery in which innovations in prose and poetry can be put on view." To provide such a gallery is a public service which it is to be hoped Mr. Laughlin will continue to render. But it must be said, quite bluntly, that this year's show is most disappointing.

This is a big book—just *how* big I don't know, since, for some reason not clear to me, the pages are not numbered. But these handsomely-printed, wide-margined pages, as one goes through them, yield alarmingly little pleasure. James Higgins' unassuming, low-keyed sketches of life in a Catholic boys' school come off very well—though, considering Joyce's *Portrait* anl *Dubliners,* they can hardly be called experimental. Eleanor Clark's *Hurry, Hurry!* is as effective here as when it appeared in *Partisan Review.* Hugh Davies' *Petron* achieves poetic intensity—though it also raises the question of what bounds, if any, should be set, in this kind of surrealist writing, to the exploitation of the sadistic and the gruesome. Where shall we fix the frontier between literature and psychoanalysis? Finally, there is another of those oddly amusing stories of Montagu O'Reilly, which use the stilted prose and floridly vulgar values of the old-fashioned paper-back novel to convey the business and social life of the big bourgeoisie. This one is quite funny and also manages to suggest, in a cockeyed way, the atmosphere of the Chicago business world of the nineties.

But this is really all that can be said for *New Directions,* 1938. The rest—except for a few poems—seemed to me neither successful nor particularly experimental. John Strauss contributes a crude and banal "proletarian" story, Ruth Lechlitner a radio play which is warmed-over MacLeish, Louis Zukovsky a poem which I estimate is over fifty pages long and which, to say the least, doesn't seem to justify its length, William Saroyan—some William Saroyan, and Harry Thornton Moore a neatly written story whose "point" escaped me completely—to run through the longer contributions. If Mr. Laughlin's editorial criteria are as catholic as he says they are, one must assume that the fault lies not with his editing but with creative writing at the moment. It may be just an off year. (The 1937 volume was much more interesting.) Or it may be some deeper blight. Future issues of *New Directions* should give us the answer.

DWIGHT MACDONALD.

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GENERAL FRANCO'S CEMETERIES

LES GRANDS CIMETIERES SOUS LA LUNE. *By Georges Bernanos. Paris, Librairie Plon.* 20 *francs.*

It has been said that the only people who have any conviction today are the Fascists, the Communists and the Catholics. Georges Bernanos is a Catholic who lacks the conviction. Probably he is no longer a Catholic in the eyes of the Church which brooks neither insubordination nor criticism on the part of its faithful. M. Bernanos is gradually breaking away from his articles of faith. The *Action Francaise's* approval of the rape of Ethiopia alienated him from the official French royalist party, to which he had belonged since its foundation. Now the clergy's support of Franco has done somewhat the same to his relations with his church. Like Joan of Arc—whom he optimistically invokes on the last page of this book—he has his own chapel. Architecturally, you might call it a free-standing chapel.

The chief interest of *Vast Cemeteries in the Moonlight* (to translate the title literally) is just that it shows the capitulation to evidence of a mind that had housed too many convictions. No matter how much we may admire the man's courage, this is bound to be a pitiful spectacle. M. Bernanos remains confused. It is much easier to determine what he is against than what he is for. His indignation showers itself upon the imbeciles (whom he used to call the "right-thinking people"), the dictators, the Spanish clergy, polemicists, the idea of progress, the philosophy of the lesser of two evils, Machiavelli and Mammon. He champions the poor and downtrodden and the fundamental dignity of man. Refusing to enroll himself, he points out that parties are a prerogative of the *bourgeoisie;* the masses—despite the plural in English—remain indivisible by any barrier between right and left. And he deplores the evolution that has made of those masses a proletariat—that is, "a vast reservoir of stultified workers plus a tiny nursery-garden of future *bourgeois.*"

If he had not been living in Palma de Majorca at the time the Spanish War broke out, Georges Bernanos might never have completely waked up. With an eighteen-year-old son in Franco's Phalanx and a pass in his pocket that identified him as a sympathizer of the Rebels, he witnessed the mass executions of suspects along the cemetery wall with a priest always in attendance to administer the extreme absolution. Along with his Spanish neighbors he got his summons to receive the sacraments and sign the register in church that would put him on the white list. He is thus able to judge the "Holy War" for what it is:

> "I can easily understand how Fear and the desire for Revenge (but isn't Revenge simply the final manifestation of Fear?) inspired the Spanish counter-revolution. But that such a state of mind should nourish the movement as long as it has remains a problem. Let me

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state, then, in no uncertain terms, that the Terror would long ago have worn itself out if the more or less open, or even conscious, complicity of the priests and the faithful had not finally succeeded in giving it a religious character."

It is impossible to question the impartiality of M. Bernanos' appraisal of the situation in Spain. But he returned to France not merely to tell what he knew of the trans-Pyrenean conflict. He has written his moving book as a warning to his countrymen. With subdued indignation, he shows the men of the right in France what they are heading toward and desperately calls on the French clergy not to emulate their Spanish colleagues. He raises his voice against that of Claudel, against Maurras and Tardieu and Flandin, against the whole ecclesiastical hierarchy. To him France is the last stronghold of Christendom and he fears mightily for its future. The men of today, he insists, "have hard hearts and soft guts. As after the Deluge, tomorrow the world may belong to spineless monsters."

Much too long and discursive, the book's great quality is its sincerity and its fairly calm accent of a man talking to us in the midst of a crumbling world. The frequence of incisive remarks makes up for the lack of any plan, surprising in the work of so accomplished a novelist. Some of the best passages are those self-justifying speeches which M. Bernanos ironically puts into the mouths of the Spanish bishops or the French royalists. The bishops recognize that, "Society gets along well enough with her poor as long as she can absorb the dissatisfied in poorhouses or prisons. When the proportion of dissatisfied increases dangerously, she calls in her police and opens wide her cemeteries." But the Church being a society herself, she must deal with human societies as they are: "Do you want us to be forever on the side of the dissatisfied? Our temporal credit would soon be exhausted! Indeed, we never fail to respect poverty and to teach that it deserves to be honored. But there is not only poverty in the world; there are the poor. The only poor we can vouch for are the voluntarily poor, our own monks and nuns." The Papal message to the rebellious Basques for use in the event of a Loyalist victory and the Saint-Theresa-of-Lisieux sermon by the agnostic constitute models of the type.

Though this is not a book for Sheed and Ward, it would be too bad if Catholics failed to read it. Macmillan has already announced a translation under the title of "A Diary of My Times" and promised that "to that great crowd of intelligent men and women who want to find some middle ground between Fascism and Communism, it gives a clear and eloquent response." This the book emphatically does not do. It offers no more than the testimony of a man of good will. Georges Bernanos has had the courage to do his awaking in public and he makes no attempt to hide the fact that he is still rubbing his eyes.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN.

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A Letter to the New Republic

In the October 19 issue of the *New Republic,* Malcolm Cowley published a lengthy article abusing PARTISAN REVIEW as 'factional', 'anti-Soviet', a perpetrator of 'literary crimes', and 'hardly' distinguishable from the *American Mercury.* As we go to press, the *New Republic* has promised to print our reply in an early issue. Pleading limitations of space, however, the *New Republic* insisted that we cut down our original letter to 1,000 words—although Mr. Cowley's attack ran over 1,700 words. (The only specific omission they stipulated was the sentence: "Isn't this the same Malcolm Cowley whose use of his position on the *New Republic* to play Communist Party politics has long been a literary scandal?" This, Bruce Bliven wrote us, "obviously transcends the legitimate boundaries of public controversy"—though Mr. Cowley was apparently within those bounds when he implied that PARTISAN REVIEW is a quasi-fascist organ. For the interest of our readers, we print below the full text of our original letter. It may be regarded as a restatement of our political position as well as an answer to Mr. Cowley.

Editor, The New Republic,
Sir:

We sympathize with Malcolm Cowley's growing impatience with PARTISAN REVIEW, whose literary and political values are at drastic variance with his own. But we must point out that his article on our magazine is a malicious and politically motivated attack masquerading as a matter of literary differences. These are strong words. We think we can show they are justified.

Mr. Cowley makes two main charges against PARTISAN REVIEW. (1) We have proclaimed that literature should not be degraded to an instrument of political factionalism, and yet we devote much space to what Mr. Cowley calls "anti-Soviet articles." (2) This secret addiction to politics has reduced PARTISAN REVIEW to the literary level of the *New Masses.*

To support his first charge, Mr. Cowley quotes from our opening Editorial Statement, which announced a policy of "no commitments to any political party." This he interprets to mean that PARTISAN REVIEW had foresworn politics and was going to devote itself to an above-the-battle kind of pure Literature, such as the *Dial* once stood for. And so he points triumphantly to the fact that we have actually paid a good deal of attention to politics. But we have never aspired to stand for Pure Literature. We have always agreed with Mr. Cowley that the contemporary writer must concern himself with politics if his work is to have any deep meaning for our time. Mr. Cowley's quotations from our editorial were, to say the least, very selective. One sentence he did *not* quote was: "Any magazine, we

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believe, that aspires to a place in the vanguard of literature today, will be revolutionary in tendency." That is clear enough, surely.

But Mr. Cowley also objects to the *kind* of political approach we have had, insisting that to attack the Communist Party's cultural line is to play factional politics. This we deny. The struggle between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism seems to us to go far beyond party or factional issues. By this time, Stalinism has ceased to be a revolutionary tendency, and in fact is rapidly turning into the opposite. We do not consider our struggle against it as committing us to any party line, any more than we consider our constant criticism of capitalist values—whether 'democratic' or fascist—a matter of factional politics. Many radical groups, from the Fourth International to the Social Democratic Federation, oppose Stalinism for much the same reasons we do. We have never endorsed the political line of any of these groups—which obviously on other subjects have deep-rooted differences among themselves—nor have we excluded any contributor from our pages because he belonged to or didn't belong to any of these groups. And if the literary sympathizers of the Communist Party have not appeared in our pages, it is because they have yielded to a well-organized boycott campaign.

Mr. Cowley quotes extensively from two paragraphs of our six-paragraph Editorial Statement. But he neither quotes from nor mentions the three central paragraphs, and for the very good reason that to do so would explode his main charge: that we are running under false colors. These paragraphs were devoted to a single theme: our reasons for considering the influence of the Communist Party a major threat to both literature and revolution in our time, and our determination to fight against this influence. Mr. Cowley is simply misrepresenting when he implies we have made any secret of our position on this issue. We must also object, in passing, to his expression, "anti-Soviet articles." He may identify the Kremlin with the Soviet Union. We don't, any more than we identify any particular administration with the United States of America.

Mr. Cowley's other charge—of inferior literary quality—he is careful to make almost wholly in the form of innuendo. Thus he implies but does not state that PARTISAN REVIEW is on the same cultural level as the *New Masses*. (Our lawyers assure us that, although calculated to injure our business, this is an expression of opinion and so not libelous). He implies but does not state that, for political reasons, we have shut the door on talented young unknowns. (We might note that our $100 short story prize was divided between two young writers whose prose we were the first to print, and that we have printed work by James Agee, Delmore Schwartz, Mary King, E. S. Bley, Jackson Matthews, Parker Tyler, Elizabeth Bishop and many other young and comparatively unknown writers.) Mr. Cowley accuses us of substituting political for esthetic criteria—and also objects

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to our poetry and stories as "second-hand" Kafka and Mallarmé. Does this imply that Kafka and Mallarmé followed a Trotskyist-Bukharinist line? He also charges that "factional politics has got into the book review." To date, we have printed 31 reviews, in only one of which—Sidney Hook's review of Kenneth Burke's book—is the Stalinist issue raised explicitly. At least two books by writers close to the Communist arty—Richard Wright and Ernest Hemingway—were praised.

Mr. Cowley states: "F. W. Dupee . . . wrote a long essay on André Malraux and ended up by dismissing him as 'the type of liberal Comintern lobbyist thrown up by the stooge politics of people's frontism'." This is a flat misquotation: Mr. Dupee applied these words not to Malraux, but to Garcia, the central character in *L'Espoir*. His article on Malraux, furthermore, is not a simple-minded political diatribe against a writer with whom he is in political disagreement, but a precise and painstaking analysis which attempts to correlate the literary and political qualities of Malraux' work. Mr. Cowley may or may not agree with Mr. Dupee's conclusions, but he has no right to imply the article is a mere piece of abuse such as—shall we say?—Mike Gold might have written.

It seems odd to us that Mr. Cowley, whose passion for Pure Literature burns in every line of his article, has never criticised the *New Masses*—which, with a great show of being fair-minded, he admits is "more timid and conventional in literary matters than it used to be"—as he now attacks PARTISAN REVIEW. It also seems odd that Mr. Cowley should find our literary standards so low when such non-political and exclusively literary magazines as *Poetry, New Directions,* and *The Criterion* have printed flattering notices of PARTISAN REVIEW.

Who is this Galahad of Pure Literature who is demanding that PARTISAN REVIEW emasculate itself politically and who can say a kind word for neo-Catholic literary magazines and Southern Agrarian literary magazines but not for anti-Stalinist literary magazines? (His position amounts to this: if you're going to touch on politics, be Stalinist; if you can't be Stalinist, then back to the Ivory Tower with you!) Who is this belated mourner at the bier of the *Dial* and the *Hound & Horn*. (According to those who followed his writing when those magazines were still alive, Mr. Cowley's admission that he "saw both of them go without much sorrow" is a masterpiece of understatement.) Isn't this the Mr. Cowley who not so long ago wrote an article defending the political censorship of literature? Isn't this the same Mr. Cowley we remember exhorting us at Writers' Congresses to climb up on the bandwagon of revolution? Isn't this the same Malcolm Cowley whose use of his position on the *New Republic* to play Communist Party politics has long been a literary scandal? And could we have mistaken the name signed to a review in the

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New Republic a few weeks ago which argued that Yeats was saved from "a broken career and an early death" by his political interests, even though he had "in many cases the wrong opinions"? "Some other week," concluded Mr. Cowley, "I should like to talk about Yeats and political criticism, as it is represented in this country by magazines like PARTISAN REVIEW." But when he came to writing the article, he said nothing about Yeats. Perhaps he realized the cases were hardly parallel. Yeats was "wrong" on Irish political issues which have only an academic interest here today, and so his political interests enriched his poetry. But PARTISAN REVIEW is "wrong" on issues which very intimately and tenderly concern Mr. Cowley, and so *our* political interests have destroyed and corrupted our literary perceptions.

Mr. Cowley concludes his high-minded defense of literary values by remarking of PARTISAN REVIEW: "Put a green cover on it, and today you could hardly tell it from the *American Mercury*." This is Red-baiting, C.P. style, no more and no less.

The Editors of PARTISAN REVIEW.

October 17, 1938.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

Of PARTISAN REVIEW, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for Oct. 1, 1938.

State of New York, County of New York—ss:

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Nancy G. Macdonald, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the PARTISAN REVIEW and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Partisan Review (unincorporated association), 539 E. 88th St., N. Y. C.; Editors, George L. K. Morris, 340 East 72nd St., N. Y. C., Dwight Macdonald, 539 East 88th St., N. Y. C., F. W. Dupee, 408 West 20th St., N. Y. C., William Phillips, 166 Second Ave., N. Y. C., Philip Rahv, 9 Bank St., N. Y. C.; Business Manager, Nancy G. Macdonald, 539 East 88th St., N. Y. C.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) Unincorporated association. Philip Rahv, President, 9 Bank St., N. Y. C.; F. W. Dupee, Vice-President, 408 West 20th St., N. Y. C.; Nancy G. Macdonald, Secretary-Treasurer, 539 East 88th Street, N. Y. C.

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NANCY G. MACDONALD, *Business Manager.*

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 14th day of October, 1938.

SAMUEL SASON, *Notary Public.*

My commission expires March 30, 1940.

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Versatile and many-sided, Mr. MacLeish has won fame in a variety of fields. As an editor of Fortune in recent years, he made several notable analyses of political and cultural life. One of his early contributions to The Nation will be a discussion with Max Lerner of "Liberalism as a Social Force Today." He will contribute articles on numerous other subjects, including Latin-American relations with the United States.

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JOHN DOS PASSOS AND THE WHOLE TRUTH
by Delmore Schwartz
THE CRITIC AND THE PUBLIC, *by Michael Roberts*
TOWARDS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA, *by F. O. Matthiessen*

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THE ATTACK ON LEVIATHAN, *by Walter Prescott Webb*
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